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THE

CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

ADDRESSES

DELIVERED IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA DURING THE AUTUMN OF 1891

BY

W. J. DAWSON

AUTHOR OF

The Makers of Modern English, *The Redemption of Edward Strahan*, etc.

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THESE ADDRESSES

ARE

DEDICATED

TO MY OLD FRIENDS IN SCOTLAND

AND

MY NEW FRIENDS IN THE NEW WORLD

AMONG WHOM

THEY WERE DELIVERED.

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INTRODUCTION.

I.

INTRODUCTION.

In the late Ecumenical Conference at Washington the subject allotted to me was "The Church of the Future," and I was allowed fifteen minutes for its treatment. Obviously, it was not possible to do more than indicate, in the most restricted and least qualified way, my general ideas of the subject.

I was able only to suggest what I believed would be the four chief characteristics of that Church. These were simplification, the democratic spirit, social aim, and intellectual and organic comprehension. By simplification I mean a movement such as we have witnessed in science and sociology toward root principles, essential truths, the result of which will be to separate keenly between the essentials and accidentals in Christian truth, and make it possible for all religious souls to draw nearer together on the basis of those fundamental truths upon which all religious souls are agreed. The theology of the churches to-day is largely manufactured outside the churches. It is the

great secular writers of our time who are making the theology of the future. It is idle to ignore the influence upon popular thought of such writers as Kingsley and George Macdonald, and the still more penetrating influence of Carlyle and Ruskin, of Tennyson and Browning. The main result of this teaching may be summed up in the famous phrase of Laurence Oliphant, "Live the life." And the present drift of things points to the conclusion that we are already moving, and even rapidly moving, toward those points of simplification and combination where the divergences and distractions of disputed theologies will be forgotten in the harmony of a religion which places less stress on dogma and more on life, less on creeds and more on character.

There is no need to define what is meant by the democratic and social spirit. Broadly speaking, we are all agreed that we are approaching, if we have not reached, an age of triumphant democracy. The example of America has had a wholly incalculable influence upon the political conditions of the Old World. Every decade adds to the power of the people, and the whole trend of modern politics is toward their fuller emancipation. But democracy in the State means democracy in the Church also. It means that in the long

run the Church which is most frankly democratic in its methods must win. Autocracy in church government is doomed. Every new school which is erected, every new philosophical book which is read, every fresh liberty which is gained for the masses of the people by the actions of senates and parliaments is another nail driven into the coffin of autocracy. And I think, therefore, that the Church which is most frankly, wisely, and genially democratic will be the Church of the Future. No Church which boasts that it ministers to an intellectual aristocracy can take a large hold on the twentieth century. The Church that touches the common people will do that, and the Church of the common people cannot fail to be the Church of the world.

Nor is there any need to explain what is meant by comprehension. Comprehension is the child of apprehension. When we have apprehended more truly in what the spirit and temper of Christ consists, comprehension in one organic whole will become possible, and not till then. To a dispassionate student of Christianity as it exists it must be a wholly amazing thing to note how widely the different bodies of Christians are separated, and yet how little separates them. In most cases the forces of separation spring from organization rather

than creed; and, even where creeds differ, the differences are for the most part infinitesimally small compared with the agreements. How little actually separates the Presbyterian from the Congregationalist, or either from the Baptist or Methodist! And one may go much further, and say how vast is the body of truth which the truly pious Romanist holds in common with the truly pious Protestant compared with the doctrines on which they disagree! It is certain that the Catholic is much nearer the Methodist than is either to the Unitarian; and yet even devout Unitarians, such as Channing or Martineau, are so essentially and thoroughly Christian in sentiment and teaching that it is hard to discover by their writings in what their divergence from the recognized Christian bodies really consists. It is the consideration of these things which leads me to hope that we may arrive at some new statement of truth which may unite all Christians in one, and that, in the final reunion of Christendom, the truth which dwells in Rome may free itself from the corruption, and even Rome may not prove forever irreconcilable. This, at least, was the hope and aim of Jesus—one fold and one Sheperd.

The great peril in discussing subjects like these is obviously that of building a church in

the clouds, and forgetting the force of facts. One almost feels that the facts are an irony upon the theory. For instance, English sacerdotalism is marked by a narrower, not a broader, vision year by year, and when it uses the word comprehension it really means absorption. Christ or the Church—which? is the question which tests all, and when that question is fairly put, especially in the newer lands of the English-speaking race, there can be no doubt as to the reply. It is not to the Church, but to the living and animating Christ that the great majority of those who profess and call themselves Christians give allegiance. A common center must needs mean a common orbit, and, therefore, the dispassionate observer cannot but ask again, Why is it there is not more unity among those who in the deep things of belief are already one? And I answer again that, in most cases, it is organizations which separate those whom faith unites. Before any practical step toward unity can be taken we must cease to regard each separate sect as a close corporation, each separate ministry as a still closer corporation, and any recognition of the good points of our neighbor as sectarian treason, and any passage across the Rubicon of artificial separation for the greater good of the whole Church as sectarian treachery. In

other words, we must cultivate fellowship, and fellowship is a plant which does not flourish without cultivation. We must draw closer together, and care more for truth and progress than for the traditions of organization. When disputed measures are to be passed through the House of Commons party-leaders gladly sacrifice doubtful clauses if they can secure assent to those clauses which express fundamental principles. There are a great many doubtful clauses in our modern Christianity, and it is too much our custom to postpone all progress by wrangling over these ; we are stiff-backed in our crotchets but lukewarm in our principles.

This is a concise statement of the ground covered by my address, and, as I have said, the time at my disposal was so limited that any attempt at qualification or elaboration was impossible. But, as I reflected more and more upon the matter, I remembered that for a long time past I had been dealing with these questions in a more or less incidental way in my public ministry. It occurred to me, therefore, that at a moment when all the great Methodist bodies of the world, representing not fewer than twenty-five millions of Christians, were assembled in fraternal council I could not do better than so order my various public

addresses that they all bore upon this fascinating theme. The addresses thus delivered now find a place in this volume. With one or two exceptions all have been preached to American or Canadian audiences. It is right to remark that in altered forms some of the addresses had been previously delivered to my own countrymen—the sermon on Wesley in St. Giles's Cathedral, Edinburgh, on the Centenary of Wesley's death; that on Progress by Iconoclasm before the University of Glasgow, and that on the Socialism of Jesus in the Maxwell Parish Church, Glasgow, as one of a series on socialism. I do not pretend that they all strictly conform to the title of this volume, but I think they have a unity which is based upon their general aim and spirit, and I publish them for two purposes; first, that they may assist in the march of a catholic and Christian progress; and, secondly, as a memento of the generous reception afforded me by the churches of the United States and Canada.

There are so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.—*St. Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xiv, 10.

Forth from the midst of Babel brought,
Parties and sects I leave behind,
Enlarged my heart, and free my thought
Whene'er the latent truth I find,
The latent truth with joy to own,
And bow to Jesu's name alone.—*John Wesley.*

II.

ON CATHOLICITY.

How are we to have a creed and yet avoid rigidity of thought? How are we to hold with all the passion of the soul vital principles, and yet be tolerant of variations of belief and principles in others? How, in a word, are we to reconcile conscientious conviction with catholic temper? To those questions St. Paul furnishes the only possible reply. He shows us that fidelity to principle need not mean narrowness of outlook, nor devotion to God contempt of the world. There are, or should be, for every man convictions that admit of no mediation.

> "Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest,
> Cannot confound, nor doubt him, nor deny;
> Yea, with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,
> Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

But the deep-natured man will recollect that the Spirit blows as it listeth, and while it brings life to all, may bring many different forms of life, just as the same wind of spring

calls into various being the grass-blade and the violet, the foliage of the bramble and the oak. The remedy for intolerance is very simple—remember other people. Remember how large the world is and how small are you. Learn to be broad-natured and not one-sided.

With the argument of this particular section of the Corinthians in its special bearing on Corinthian church-life we need not seriously concern ourselves. Like so much of St. Paul's writing the incidental rises into the essential—the page meant to deal with some transient condition of things suddenly flashes forth the star-birth of some great illuminating principle, which is good for all time. Put in the briefest phrase, the argument of St. Paul is for intelligibility of speech. For it is a prostitution of speech when language is used without thought and meaning—when the aim of the speaker is rather to attract men by the marvel of his words than the truth of his message. It is worse than this in the minister of the Gospel, it is an equal mockery of God and man—of God, whose message is betrayed; and of man, whose desires are disappointed. It was of such a practice that Milton wrote with bitter truth, "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed." It is this vainglorious habit of using unintelligent words of which St. Paul speaks in

this chapter, and says, with stinging emphasis, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

But here another and a very natural thought suggests itself. That which is unintelligible to one may be intelligible enough to some one else, for the mind and heart of man have many dialects, even as music utters itself through many instruments. Much of the speech of an educated man must always be unintelligible to the illiterate man, because the wider a man's culture is the larger and more various does his vocabulary become. When Wordsworth, for instance, set himself to write in the exact language of common life he set himself an impossible task, because he was not a common man, and it was not possible for him to restrict himself to the bald and narrow vocabulary of the peddler or the peasant. The most he could do was to treat of simple themes in a simple spirit, but by the very urgency of his own genius he was bound to use hundreds of words which a Cumbrian laborer would neither use nor comprehend. This, then, is the thought that occurs to the acute mind of Paul, that when we say a certain speaker is unintelligible we must remember that, though

unintelligible to us, he may be intelligible to some one else. The world is too big a place for one sort of speech to suit every body. Mind acts upon mind, and the Spirit of God acts upon men through a thousand channels and by means and dialects which are always changing. It does not follow that because a man is unintelligible to you that he is so to others, that because he cannot preach to you that, therefore, he is called to preach to no one. The world is full of voices—tender, stern, startling—some falling on tired hearts like a mother's comforting, some ringing like a trumpet peal that makes the pulses leap, some speaking in arraignment of our slothfulness, and some of our restlessness; voices appealing in turn to the intellect, the heart, the conscience, calling us to the vision of knowledge or of love or duty—some speaking roughly and plainly, so that the wayfaring man may not err; some speaking in the language of entrancement, which can only be understood and felt by the initiated; but in all these world-voices there is none without signification. What the text points toward, then, is sympathy and breadth of thought, and what it rebukes is one-sidedness. To the truly catholic understanding there is nothing in the world without its meaning; and if a

voice means nothing to us we may be sure there are others who do not so regard it; for "there are many voices, but none without signification."

There are three directions in which this rebuke of one-sidedness may be applied. First of all, we may apply it to church methods, church organizations, and church ideals. That alone might afford us ample field for illustration of the whole subject; but let us take a single instance of this lesson of comprehension in church ideals. There are two ideals of the Church which have always existed, always more or less in conflict, and always failing to recognize and understand each other. There is, first of all, the ideal of the Church as a school of personal and spiritual culture, and consequently of the Christian life as a life of devout contemplation. In all ages men have cried for shelter to grow ripe and leisure to grow wise. They have found that the rude hubbub of the world is hostile to the development of the more delicate graces of the Spirit, and have sought the dewy shades of contemplation, where in silence and repose the spiritual nature might put forth its bloom and grow into the beauty of perfection. To the tired hearts of men the Church has afforded this asylum and retreat. It has rebuked the restless-

ness of man and called him aside from the race for wealth or honor to the stillness of a cloistral life, broken only by the quiet bells that ring to prayer. And it is not surprising that the world has always felt the charm of that appeal, and that men, worn out with the frantic struggles of life, have sought the calm of mountain monasteries, where the king lays down his crown, the statesman his perplexities, and the scholar his vexations. The truth which is expressed in such a state of things is a great truth, and one which we cannot afford to forget. It is that man needs silence and repose for the nobler qualities of his soul to be developed, and it would be as foolish for us to expect the rose to become fresh and fragrant without dew as for the gracious peace of the true saint to be won without the ministry of prayer and pious contemplation.

Over against this ideal of the Church is set another, which has been equally powerful in all ages, but exceptionally so in our own—the ideal of the Church as a social corporation, a school of disciplined activity, or, to use a familiar phrase, the "Church militant." The kingdom of God, in the nature of things, cannot be quiescent; its essential ideals are government, service, and conquest. Kingdoms invoke the soldier spirit, and throughout Chris-

tianity from the first there has run a soldierly fiber of courage, of defiance, of organization, and of purpose. But to the one-sided man those two ideals seemed to be irreconcilably opposed. What, says he, has Thomas à Kempis in common with Oliver Cromwell? What bond of union is there between St. Bernard, looking down on the world from his mountain eyrie of silence, and Luther, battling in it with many a clanging blow, with words which were half battles? Or, if we come to our own day, what reconciliation can be found between the quiet worshiper who seeks the sanctuary for its peace and the busy, eager, irrepressible Christian worker, to whom the sanctuary is simply the focus of intense activity, where zeal is stimulated and where strenuous labor finds at once its center and encouragement? To the one-sided man there is no reconciliation between these ideals. The busy Christian sees in the cloistral Christian simply an idler, whose religion is sublimated selfishness, and the cloistral Christian sees only in the other a type of fussy zeal and mischievous distraction. The one prays little and works much, the other works little and prays much. Each hears his own bell ring for his own particular worship, and neither recognizes the significance which is in the bell that calls the other. The one does not recog-

nize the qualities of the other, only his defects, and so finally each becomes one-sided, deficient in breadth and catholicity, the victim of his own egotistic view of things, and incapable at last of understanding any other type of religion but that which he himself represents, but does not adorn.

But in the true church organization both these ideals are needed, and all that lies between the two extremes; and no lesson is taught more clearly than this by Jesus Christ in the selection of his disciples and apostles. He chose not one type of man, but many types, and so different that, humanly speaking, there could be no harmony between them. For what contrast could be greater than the contrast between John with his mysticism and Thomas with his doubts, Peter with his rude eloquence and blunt realism and Paul with his subtle insight and delicately balanced mind? And, surely, the lesson is clear enough that in dealing with a world full of people you may have but one message; but you need different men who can translate it into their own dialect, and be free to deliver it after their own individual method. Peter is not the man for Mars' Hill, nor Thomas for the day of Pentecost, and the geographical distance that lies between Mars' Hill and Jerusalem is simply

typical of the immense intellectual differences between a Peter and a Paul. Each voice has its own significance, and if Peter cannot always catch the significance of Paul's—and he tells us he cannot; he confesses that his brother Paul has written many things which are hard to understand—yet Paul can always understand the significance of Peter's. And that is one of the lessons we must needs learn, and one we find it most difficult to learn. Let there be the unity of the faith and the bond of peace, but there will also be the difference of administration. We shall win men not by outraging, but by consulting, their idiosyncrasies. We must work along the plane of the least resistance. We must overcome the evil by cooperating with the good in them. We must be all things to all men, if we may save some; and, therefore, we want liturgies, and we do not want them; we want organs, and we can do without them; we want street evangelists and scholarly bishops; we want High Church, Low Church, Broad Church, No Church, and we must learn to say with Paul, "We rejoice in all, if Christ be preached; even though he be preached of contention." The street evangelist may please me, and the scholarly bishop may alienate you; but it does not follow that what helps me will help every body, and that

what disgusts you will be distasteful to every one. What we have to recollect is that Christianity is not for a man, but for men; not for a race, but for races; not for a nation, but for the world; and that which may be a confused and grating voice to us may ring out full and clear to others with the authentic message of the gospel of peace.

Still more forcible is the rebuke of one-sided Christian teaching which may be found in this passage. Over the teaching of Christianity infinite disputes have arisen; and what is the nature and history of such disputes? Now, we often say that life follows from teaching, but an equally axiomatic truth is that in the first instance teaching has invariably sprung from life. Somewhere in the heart of some one man or body of men a new illumination has sprung up, and there has flashed upon the consciences of men a sense of the profound significance of certain truths. That which a man believes profoundly he cannot help impressing on others, and there is no power like the power of intense conviction. He may have grasped but a fragment of the truth, but it is truth, and often to him it is all the truth. Gradually around this fragment of clearly realized and deeply felt truth a new school of thought or a new Church clusters. And so

long as this particular truth is profoundly felt it cannot help being a force in the world. But gradually the early glow dies away; the body of truth ceases to be warm with life because the spirit has passed out of it, and instead of the leaven that bred life there is left the dry kernel out of which life has departed. It is at that point the theologian is supreme, for in the decay of faith theology always supplants religion. The Church goes on echoing old forms of dogma which were once full of vitality, and becomes creed-bound, stereotyped, lethargic, formal. To have a sound faith is held to be higher than to be a good man, and the right creed takes the place of the right life. In a word, the movement out of which a great national regeneration sprang has spent its force, and all that is left is a Church that clings tenaciously to its dogmas, and all the more so because it is all that there is left to cling to. That is one chapter in the history of the Church, and alas! too common a one.

And then there is another chapter, which, with more or less delay, and such differences as are incident on environment, is sure to follow.

> "The old order changes, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfills himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

That which was once good, forceful, vital, is now corrupt, and then new men rise up, who use a new language. Against their life there is no reproach, but men miss in their teaching the ring of old familiar phrases. They cast from them old forms of speech, and utter their message in fresh and living language, and then because it is fresh and not stereotyped, because it is living and not formal, because the ancient platitudes have given place to new fire of thought and theme—then theological hue and cry begins, for it is always safer to be platitudinarian than latitudinarian. Instead of counting it one of God's infinite mercies that men do rise up who cannot be content with decaying forms, but who in their thirst for truth go down to the bottom wells again and draw the water straight from the rock, men turn upon them and rend them because they will not use the common pump and fill their cup at a choked and feeble fountain. Instead of recognizing the profound philosophy of the truth that even a good custom may corrupt the world when it becomes stagnant, they refuse to believe in a God of variety, who fulfills himself in many ways, and cling to the idea of a God of uniformity, who fulfills himself only in one way. And then comes one-sidedness, and from its issue rancor and bitter-

ness and division—an evil birth—and the spirit of religion is lost in contentions about religion, and there is wasted over the forms of faith the strength that should go for the cleansing of the heart and the conversion of the world. And it was precisely this spirit which is so grandly rebuked by Dr. Johnson in words which surely have a very obvious application to-day: "Let us not be found when our Master calls us stripping the lace off our waistcoats, but the spirit of contention from our souls and tongues. Alas! sir, the man who cannot get to heaven in a green coat will not find his way thither any sooner in a gray one." In other words, it is not the cut of theological dress that takes a man to heaven, but the heart and life. And the one test of discipleship which Christ gives is this: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them—he it is that loveth me."

I do not, however, say that new teachers may not be themselves intolerant, for there is an intolerance of heterodoxy quite as vile as that of orthodoxy, and a frequent narrowness in so-called latitudinarianism not less offensive than the utmost narrowness of a worn-out dogmatism. In the effort to be broad it is possible to become narrow, and men may be intolerant apostles of toleration,

unmitered popes condemning papacy, dissentient dogmatists denouncing dogma, narrowing the whole realm of faith down to the convictions of an individual. But of that I am not the judge, nor will I judge any man; all I say is that the need for these new leaders—these new teachers with new ways of expressing their thoughts—springs out of the complexity and variety of nature itself.

And of this let us take an illustration. The force underlying every thing is life, but how infinite are the various forms which life assumes! You have the vegetable kingdom and the animal kingdom, but you have vegetables with the characteristics of animals, and animals with the characteristics of vegetables. You have flowers that are carnivorous, and carnivorous insects shaped and colored like flowers, which are, so to speak, winged blossoms fluttering on the border-line of two kingdoms, and are citizens of each. You have in the daisy a subtle power of life you cannot measure, and the same mysterious pulse beats and is fed, from the same mysterious source, in bird and beast and man. Life every-where. Life that shapes itself into deformity and beauty—life that clothes itself with obscurity and splendor—life that has its insignificant and appalling manifestation—a million forms, all delicately con-

ceived and expressed, but the same thing in all—the mystery of which no man can fathom, the origin of which no man can find, the miracle of which no man can exhaust—the mystery of life. And so in all these infinite varieties of human thought there is one thing underlying all, and that is Truth. There is no heresy without its touch of truth; no error that has ever governed men that has not somewhere at its root, like a mysterious pulse of life, a concealed fragment of truth. Truth also manifests itself in a thousand ways; in rough and definite forms; in elusive and indistinct creations, like the blossoms that are winged and the wings that are blossoms. Truth breathes in the fancy of the poet, the arguments of the philosopher, the prayers of the monk, the researches of the scholar, the preaching of heterodox and othodox alike. And if we could see life as a whole, if we could conceive of the life of any single city as a whole, with its multifarious minds and hopes and wants, we should see that all these are needed and are the divine complements of each other. All are needed. If the strange voice has no message for me it may have for another, and if the old orthodoxy repel me it may be the very life of life to others, whose spirit is purer and whose hands are quicker

unto good than mine. As for me, I hear the voices and I hear something of God in all. I can sit in the cloistral calm with Thomas à Kempis; I can walk in the blackness of darkness with John Bunyan; I can share the vast enthusiasms of John Wesley. I can rejoice in the sympathetic breadth of Charles Kingsley, the masculine reason of Maurice, the tenderness of George Macdonald, the insight and charm of Martineau. I can worship with the Catholic or the Salvationist; I can hear the clear chime of truth sound through the Unitarianism of Channing; and if sometimes the voice fades upon my ear I may at least believe that it speaks to some one else, for "there are many voices, and none of them is without signification." That is what we need to recollect, that all these men are really necessary to each other; that one presents a view of truth the other omitted; that the truth has many sides, and it needs many men and many minds to express it. We need to recollect that the forms of truth are as complex as the varieties of man himself, but in all and through all the eternal God is uttering himself. And the whole truth is not contained in your creed nor mine any more than the whole sun is mine because he shines into my window. That sunlight floods other worlds than mine—it is too

vast a thing for me to claim and bind. It shines on men I do not know, it gladdens myriads I have not seen; but its source is one, and it is shed abroad by him of whom it is said, "He is the light of every man who cometh into the world."

And then there is also the implied reproach of these words against a one-sided life. The narrow and ill-balanced ideal of the Church, the petty and partial view of truth, must needs breed the narrow and one-sided life. For just as men get one-sided views of doctrines so they get one-sided views of life, and the general mistake is in the direction of repression—the mutilation of life, and not its development. Men cut themselves off from this custom and that amusement; they narrow life down to a few barren axioms and pursuits, until their mental life becomes a sort of one-roomed life, with no space, no air, no outlook. Such men's lives remind me of nothing so much as that celebrated symphony of Hadyn's, in which one by one the instruments cease and the players go out silently, until at last there is but one left upon an empty stage and in a gathering darkness. For it is the spectacle of the many-stringed music of life gradually ceasing that we see in such a life. Religion is narrowed to a dogma and life to a habit. A

virtue, some solitary isolated virtue, like the dwarfed fruit of an unhealthy tree, is made to do duty for religion. A bundle of formal habits, unconnected by any vital principle, is thrust forward as a substitute for a character. A moral and intellectual pigmy takes the place of that magnificent Pauline conception of a manhood which has risen to the fullness of the stature of Christ and masquerades as a sample Christian. Is it wonderful that Christianity is so badly misunderstood by the world, when its own professors so little understand it?

What, then, is the Christian theory of life? It is sanctification, not withdrawal, the redemption of the common lot by the infusion of a higher spirit. There is nothing in the whole round of life, always excepting that which is distinctly sinful in itself, which must be judged common or unclean by the true Christian. It is the spirit of use which determines what the world is to us. We may condemn art, or music, or sport, if we will, and withdraw from them; but the only result will be that they will go on without us, but along a different and a lower plane. The artist will then no longer paint Madonnas, and the musician will compose oratorios no more; and let the history of the past and the observation of to-day inform us what will take their place. We may sweep

into one intolerant prohibition things which are innocent in themselves, and which give no evidence of perversion; things which were once innocent and are now partially perverted; things which are the expression of natural human tastes, but which are frequently abused; things which are the expression of depraved tastes, and admit of no apology; but do we really gain any thing by this undiscriminating censure? Do we produce at the very best a high type of either manhood or society? Is not the manhood a thing of shreds and patches and the society an artificial fabric of shallow virtue, the product of coercion, but all the while secretly resenting the coercion and preparing for revolt? The testimony of history is again quite clear and unmistakable. The fire which kindles Savonarola's Bonfire of the Vanities is the fire which will presently light his own stake, and the kingdom of the saints is violently swept away by the immense recoiling wave of the Restoration. Reforms from the outside always fail; the only reform that can last is from the inside; it is as leaven, which begins in the center and leavens the whole lump.

And quite apart from this, it is a question which demands reply, "Is the world to be treated as an evil vision by the Christian?" Is this many-citied globe, this vast collection

of hands which labor for each other, and of brains that toil to help all comers, this world wherein splendor and delight are found, music interpreting the inarticulate passions of the soul, and art building up visions of imperishable beauty—is it a thing to be treated as wholly evil? Should we climb our pillar like Stylites, and there rot in what we dare to miscall sainthood, esteeming the world at our feet a leper's ward, and all its various life of unnamed charities and natural humanities as a sin-infected thing? Who is the leper—Stylites or the world? Alas! for poor Stylites and men like him. He was only the devil's saint after all. He was what he called himself, though, as is the fashion of such men, he never meant to be believed,

> "From scalp to sole, one slough and crust of sin,
> Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven."

There are men like him still, who stand upon the pillar of their solitary dogmatism—the dogmatism of a crotchet—and condemn all who do not agree with them. But the crowd is right and they are wrong. They are not saints, they are pseudo-saints, they are religious abortions. Sainthood is righteousness and soberness and a sound mind. Sainthood has its root in the common earth, and from that draws the vital sap which feeds the blos-

soms of eternity. Sainthood is the saving of others, not the saving of self. Sainthood opens a warm bosom to all the unhappy of that toiling crowd; it is comradeship; but it is comradeship penetrated with a divine pity which confesses—

> "Then with a rush the intolerable craving
> Shivers throughout me like a trumpet-call—
> O, to save these! to perish for their saving,
> Die for their life, be offered for them all."

I will be tempted to no Stylites-pillar; I will not see how narrow I can make my life, but how broad; I will not try how miserable I can make myself, and then blasphemously call my peevishness piety, but how happy I can be, and how happy I can make others, and so I will use the world as not abusing it. Let those who will climb the dismal pillar of their crotchets and starve every instinct of art and joy and beauty which God has given them, every wholesome human craving and delight. As for me, I hear the voice of singers at a feast, and I am going down to Cana of Galilee to meet Him who dined with publicans and sinners.

Do you remember the exquisite lines which Wordsworth wrote about his wife?

> "She was a phantom of delight
> When first she gleamed upon my sight;

A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament.
I saw her, upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman, too;
A creature not too bright nor good
For human nature's daily food."

What! is it possible to be too bright or good? Yes, it is; a great deal too bright and good for human nature's daily food. The world has no taste, and still less use, for fastidious and impalpable sainthood. And when men have so withdrawn from the world as to cease to be of use to it they often say they have gained "the higher life," and if that be the "higher life" I prefer the lower. The fact is, they have lost their life, because they have lost their relation to humanity. For we may safely conclude that he who has ceased to serve humanity has ceased to serve Christ, and that which is "unfit for human nature's daily food" is fit only to be cast out upon the dunghill and trodden under foot of men.

But for the healthy man—and health is the true equivalent of religion—there will be an infinite interest in life and in all that concerns life. He will want to see it all, to know it all, to understand it all. A modern writer has spoken of that "magnificent rage of living" which throbs in the heart of one-and-twenty; and that rage of living, that keen sense of the

delight and glory of life which fills the heart of youth is a natural thing. Not to delight in life is to pour scorn upon God and his works and his ordering of things. To turn your back upon the finished art of God's hands, the heavens and the earth which he has formed, is simply to insult their Maker. To take the narrowest possible interest in life is to disdain and reject the great education which God has provided for you, and, so far from showing a superior piety, it only reflects an ungladdened heart. Once more the voice of Paul reaches us, and there is the ring of true manhood in its tone: "All things are yours;" there is only one thing which is not yours—you "are not your own." All things are yours—art and science, nature and books, laughter and sunlight; only you are "not your own," for the one condition upon which God gives us so much is that we give ourselves away.

> "He only lives in the world's life
> Who hath renounced his own."

Here, then, is full life, broad life, happy life, life as God would have you live it. Endeavor to estimate the full breadth of life, and to find God in it all. Recognize the significance of those voices which reach you daily through the penetrating tranquillity of nature, the wis-

dom of books, the suggestions of art, the stormy world-clangors which assail you out of the great Armageddon, where men struggle ceaselessly in political and social causes, and where some strenuous soul is hourly fighting his last battle. World-voices, wind-voices, star-voices; voices reaching us from the dramas of human life and struggle, from the far heights of prayer, from the near valleys of the shadow of death; voices of wisdom, laughter, hope, sorrowful confession, lamenting folly, obscure heroism; these—and how many others?—reach us moment by moment, and there is something of God in all. Seek him, and you shall find. Be a lover of God, and God will be every-where for you. And so the world will be transfigured, and you will say—

> "The world's no blot to me, nor blank:
> It means intensely and means good;
> To find its meaning is my meat and drink."

Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for to those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan, that is, a piece of brass.—2 *Kings xviii*, 1–4.

I am convinced that the Lord hath yet more truth for us yet to break forth out of his holy word.—*John Robinson* (1620), *Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers.*

III.

NEHUSHTAN.

A STUDY IN PROGRESS BY ICONOCLASM.

THERE is a short verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews which looks so like a truism that we are apt to overlook its real significance. "Now that," says the writer, "which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." It vanishes away. It crumbles into unnoticed ruin; it silently withdraws itself like one of those strange ocean islands which to-day are green with life, and in a year's time are submerged and forgotten. We are familiar with this noiseless exodus of customs, habits of thought, and methods of life; when we ask for them we are told they are not—they have withdrawn. But there is another process by which things which are old and decayed have to be got rid of. You may have age without senility, and decay without apparent lack of force. The thing that ought to vanish away may stubbornly refuse to do any thing of the kind. It is a mistake to suppose that stupidity is a passive thing—it often possesses a deadly activity, a

most pugnacious energy. So far from vanishing away, evil custom may deliberately block every road of progress, and thus decay—of truth, of knowledge, of religious forms—may be an inert corrupting mass incapable of moving itself, lying right athwart the march of humanity, and breeding pollution and death on every side. What must be done then? Then another force comes into play, Iconoclasm. What will not withdraw must be expelled; what does not peaceably dissolve before the presence of a new age must be broken by it.

Now, from this point of view, this story of Hezekiah's breaking the brazen serpent of Moses is one of the most striking and instructive passages in the whole Bible. It is the story of what men would call an act of sacrilege or heroic common-sense, precisely as they are disposed to view it. Hezekiah, in this early section of his life, was one of those in whom the noble Hebrew hatred of idolatry burned clear and strong. He came to the throne in the very flower of his manhood, and he had given to him that happiest of all fates, power to carry out without hinderance the noblest purposes of his heart. It was not his lot to eat out his heart in silence or prophesy to deaf ears and mocking mouths, as many a

prophet had done before him. He had nourished his youth in the fear of God, and now his hour had come.

It is easy to picture to ourselves how this manly nature had turned away indignant from the polluted Baal-worship of his time, and had often longed to strike a blow against that which was the disgrace, the dishonor, and the open sore of his nation. It is easy, also, to imagine the temptations to expediency which would beset one so young, when suddenly there was thrust into his hand the power by which his ideals might be realized. We have all known men who were full of noble purpose when they were impotent, and of ignoble hesitation when they were powerful; politicians who promised much before the people heeded them, and did nothing when the people trusted them; governments whose members could propose heroic remedies in the days of obscurity, but who have been false to every pledge and promise of the past in the hour of victory. There is nothing easier than to be brave when it is impossible to reduce our words to action, and to forget our vows when the hour for their fullfillment is at hand. Hezekiah was not one of these. He was no truckler, no time-server, no braggart, prodigal in promise and niggardly in action. He ascended the throne with a

resolute determination to do right at all costs, and do right all round. He drew no fine distinction between the Baal-worshiper's sacrifice to an idol and the Israelitish reverence for the brazen serpent of Moses. There was a Cromwellian directness, honesty, and common-sense about him. He saw that Baal's statue in the grove and the brazen serpent in the temple meant much the same thing, and were the causes of the same evils to the people. Each was worshiped, and each was therefore evil. If one was to be destroyed, the other must perish with it: and therefore "he brake in pieces the brazen serpent of Moses, and said it is *Nehushtan*, that is, a piece of brass." And it was one of the most daring feats of iconoclasm which the history of the world records.

Now let us consider what the brazen serpent of Moses was, and we shall understand the motives for Hezekiah's conduct.

First of all, we have to remember that it had been the channel of a divine grace. Seven hundred years before there had happened a memorable thing in Jewish history. God was making a nation, and the forty years of miserable wandering in the desert was the first stage in its making. The first great lesson which the people had to learn was a profound faith in God, and the wandering in the desert was the

school in which that faith was learned. The lesson was difficult and bitter, and we can hardly be surprised that many times the experiment broke down. Think of what it meant for a people who had grown soft and sensuous with slavery to be forced out into a life of uncertainty and peril; to drift up and down the immeasurable wilderness seemingly without plan or purpose or issue; to have no home, no resting-place; for the dead to be buried where they fell, and the little children to grow up how they could amid the hazards of a nomad's life; and for this to last not for a year or a decade, but a life-time, and for years to pass, and the leaders to die one by one without the vision of that promised land, which seemed so immediate and real when they left the brickfields of Egypt. Picture to yourself that footsore, weary multitude, withered age and dawning youth, suffering perpetual eviction and exile, and can you wonder that the bitter cry rose at last, "Wherefore have ye brought us up to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread!" It was a sensual complaint, and God answered it by sending fiery serpents among them, as if to teach them that there were worse things than lack of meat. And then it was that the

brazen serpent was made, and whoso looked on it in faith was healed. Out of the thing which had stung them came healing, as if God would teach them by this strange symbolism that his chastisement was a blessing in disguise. The piece of twisted brass, hastily shaped into the fashion of a serpent, became the channel of a divine grace. We can readily understand why that curious symbol was sacredly preserved and carried with them through all their tumultuous fortunes. We can partly understand, also, how it came to be looked upon as a charm, till at last incense was burned before it, and to it, ugly piece of twisted, tarnished brass as it was, worship was offered. And then it was time to break it. A channel of grace which serves one generation may become a source of infection and disaster to the next, and God is not limited to this or that method of healing men, for he is a God not of uniformity, but of variety. When men worship the mere channel of a heavenly grace, and lift no eyes of faith and reverence beyond the brazen serpent to the eternal God who shines upon them from the heavens, then it is time for some Hezekiah to come and to break the symbol, and to cry, "It is *Nehushtan*, that is, a bit of brass!"

But this brazen serpent was also a relic and

a memory. We know well how natural it is for men to reverence relics of the past, especially when those relics represent great national events. We smile at the Catholic devotee's veneration for the bones of saints, the supposed wood of the cross, the traditional fragments of the raiment of the Saviour; but, supposing we could be quite sure that those things were real and authentic, who would not look upon them with reverence? We crowd to exhibitions where we may see the prayer-book of Queen Mary, or the blood-stained tippet which Anne Boleyn wore upon the scaffold, or the pocket Bible which Oliver Cromwell carried with him into the battle of Marston Moor, or the scanty records of early Methodist heroism; is it a true or false instinct which holds us silent when we look on these things, and which thrills us with a strange awe as we stand within the precincts of the Tower, or tread the time-worn floors of Holyrood? It is a right instinct, for reverence for the past is one of the secrets of national greatness. The most shallow-minded tourist who stands within the room where Shakespeare was born or George Washington died can scarcely help feeling some thrill of keen emotion in the recollection of all that those names recall, and all that has been witnessed by

those narrow walls in the unrecorded past. For something imperishable has been there and has left its glory. There arose a fountain which has overflowed the world, a force which has outlived the havoc of mortality. One almost hears the solemn clock of eternity beating in such a scene, and realizes that all our noisy years are but moments in the being of the Everlasting Silence. And if we can feel thus for secular names, how much more for names of symbols which are associated with a divine glory? Who would not feel constrained to bow his head in profound emotion, if not in adoration, if he could be sure that he was looking on the very wood to which the Saviour's hand was nailed in the agony of Calvary, or the napkin in which they wrapped his head when they anointed him with frankincense and laid him in his tomb? And it was thus that generations of Israelites had learned to regard the brazen serpent. It was the symbol of a great deliverance, it was the key that unlocked the door of a nation's memories. It was natural and it was right to reverence it. But when it took the place of God, when the sacred relic is a fetich which obscures the Saviour, when men manifest a passionate regard for the mere sentimentalities and symbolisms of Christianity, and live their whole life

in habitual defiance of the spirit and temper of Christ, then God raises up some Hezekiah who does his work with a ruthless iconoclasm, and, dashing the precious relic or sacred symbol to the ground, cries, "Behold it is nothing but Nehushtan—a piece of brass."

There are natures to which symbolism in worship is necessary, and there are natures to which all symbolism is abhorrent. But even where it is abhorrent it may still be necessary, and, perhaps, the more necessary because it is abhorrent. The hard, practical, unimaginative nature usually resents symbolism. Are you building a church? Such a man will make it as much like a barn as he can, and it is merely wasting words to tell him that the spire may be a finger pointing to the sky, and the painted window, with its crowned and saintly figures, a spectacle which may liberate and enrich the imagination; and the "height, the space, the gloom, the glory" of the great cathedral roof a fit pathway by which the thoughts of men may travel Godward. Are you arranging your order of service? Such a man will make it as bald as possible, as much like an auctioneer's performance as he can, and the very idea that music may be the servant of devotion and that the sweet voice of the chorister may teach us more of truth and God

than all the bitter eloquence of the heated pulpiteer is to him mere monstrous and repulsive nonsense. No; to such a man baldness, plainness, ugliness become the very essentials of spiritual worship. Every thing about the man reflects the starved instincts of a narrow soul, and he sets up those instincts as a universal standard. He is incapable of understanding what the beauty of the Lord our God is, or of uttering the prayer that beauty as well as strength may dwell in the sanctuary. Every farthing spent beyond the exact needs of brick and mortar in building God's house is to him a hideous extravagance, and his perpetual Judas-cry is, "Why this waste?"

But it is not upon any such plan of Puritanical parsimony that God has framed this world, nor is it for us to give him our worst who has always given us his best. And this very same practical and unimaginative man, if he did but know it, is precisely the man who most needs symbolism in worship, for the imaginative carry their own symbolism with them. It is he who really needs visible types and the enchantment of a visible beauty to warm his frigid thoughts and touch his heart with the liberating hand of a true emotion. The immense hold which the Catholic Church has always had, and still has, on the minds of the

masses—and let it be remembered that the masses are mainly the poor, whose lives are necessarily passed for the most part in sordid and ugly surroundings—is largely accounted for by the fact that Catholicism has always known how to awaken and satisfy the appetite for beauty. On the other hand, the loss of Protestantism through its awful contempt for, and neglect of, the instinct of beauty has been beyond all computation; and when I hear, as I often hear, of the children of stiff Nonconformists turning from the bareness of the meeting-house to more ornate services and surroundings, I know that the secret of half these defections lies in the natural need of the average human nature for symbolism in worship, or, at least, for such elements in worship as shall make God's house the house beautiful to the countless toilers on whom no radiance of beauty ever falls.

I say that we Protestants have neglected these instincts, and that we still neglect them. In the greatest age of art it was the Church that was adorned with great pictures, representing martyr constancy and holy mysteries of love and passion; it was for the Church that the great music was composed; and the Church itself, in its soaring glory of golden cupola or carven spire, was a thing so splendid that it

seemed to stand apart from common life, and to overtower it, as the proper incarnation of divine things and thoughts. To be permitted to paint a picture worthy of the house of God, or to produce a solemn music fitted for its praise or lamentations, was then the most passionate dream of artist and musician. How is it that in small European cities, which at no time were overprosperous, we find baptistries and churches and cathedrals of such exquisite grace or massive splendor that men travel from the ends of the earth to see them and look upon them, wondering all the while how it came to pass that such creations were begotten in such places? The reply is plain: these precious gems of architecture exist because men once had a species of reverence for the house of God which has long since passed away. In those days the church was the sacred depository of all things rare and beautiful. Then a Raphael thought it no disgrace to paint for the banner of a common church procession a Madonna and child so lovely that to-day thousands visit the galleries of Dresden for the one purpose of beholding it. How do we now treat our sacred pictures, when, as happens rarely, one worthy of that word is actually produced? We make money of it by showing it at a shilling a head, and what there is of

sacredness in it is killed by the surroundings we provide for it. We have wholly lost the art of cathedral-building; we have neither the patience nor the inspiration for the work; we build by contract, and our work does not endure.

We say we have a more spiritual reverence than the Middle Ages had; but our reverence does not go far enough to teach us how to build the house of God with honesty and thoroughness. We say that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; no, clearly not in such temples as ours, where the very walls are stucco lies and the adornments glaring gilt impostures. We say that the true worshiper can dispense with such aids as art and beauty may afford, and this is true; but how few are these true worshipers, and how many those in whom devotion is a temper difficult of growth, and, therefore, needing every sort of element which can strengthen or develop it? We may ignore these desires for beauty if we please, but as long as human nature exists men will prefer beauty to deformity, and simply because the majority of men are dull in imagination the majority are always too thankful for any symbolism which enables them the better to understand the deep things of the Spirit. It would be at once the falsest and the

shallowest possible interpretation of this passage if we assumed that because symbolism is abused therefore all symbols should be abolished.

But of what this passage does mean, and how alone it can be understood, we have many lessons in the past history of the Church. Thus, when Jesus said, "This is my body, this is my blood," he used a symbol, a beautiful and touching symbol. He meant to say that the disciple is spiritually nourished with the very life of his Lord, and that this life passing into him changes his vile body to a heavenly likeness, and makes it one with Christ in immortal life. The picture of Jesus standing among his sorrowful disciples on the night of his betrayal, and lifting that simple cup of wine and calling it his blood, is an immortal picture which has sunk deep into the heart and imagination of the world. It is the poetry of farewell, and for the Christian it is the symbol of eternal love and life. But when men begin to take the words literally, when in process of time the wafer is delared the very body of Christ and the wine his very blood, when the priest and his formal rites obscure the Saviour, then a new movement begins in men's hearts, and honest men feel about the sacrament of communion as Hezekiah felt about the brazen

serpent. There is then a revulsion from a symbolism which has been abused and misinterpreted, and men go to the other extreme of a worship which is stripped bare of all symbolism.

We may, and do, perhaps, shrink from the violent temper of such reformers, but the iconoclast at his very worst is better than the idolatrous priest at his very best. Better a thousand times to worship in a barn or on the bleak hill-side with the Covenanters than to bow before an image or a wafer in the most glorious temple ever built with hands. Better that the cathedral shall be wrecked, and all its gathered wealth of art and beauty shattered in the dust, than that men shall make it the place where the symbol is worshiped and the eternal God is forgotten. Man can worship God without symbol or temple, as Elijah did in the desert, as St. Paul did in the poorest homes of Corinth or Thessalonica, where he must literally have held cottage-meetings; but man cannot worship God when he offers to a piece of brass the sacrifice which is due to God alone. The worshiped serpent in the temple is the most loathsome and terrible of all defilements, and there becomes an intolerable insult to God. And it was that vision of the worshiped serpent which William Blake saw and

described in those weird and marvelous verses of his :

"I saw a chapel all of gold,
Which none did dare to enter in,
And many weeping stood without,
Weeping, mourning, worshiping.

"I saw a serpent rise between
The white pillars of the door,
And he forced and forced and forced,
Till he the golden hinges tore.

"And along the pavement sweet,
Set with pearls and rubies bright,
All his shining length he drew,
Till upon the altar white

"He vomited his poison out
On the bread and on the wine :
—So I turned into a sty,
And laid me down among the swine."

And what Blake means to teach is that even the swine-trough of the prodigal is a likelier place wherein to worship God than the defiled sanctuary where the idolatrous serpent lies coiled in the holy place, and is the thing which men worship. When that happens it is time for Hezekiah to come to the throne and do his work. Nothing must stand in the way ; neither use nor wont, neither memory nor symbolism, neither past service nor present custom, neither the wrath nor the horror nor the outraged sensibility of the people : the serpent must be

broken, and, standing on its shattered fragments, he shall cry, " Behold, it is *Nehushtan*, it is a piece of brass ! "

How, then, does this story apply itself to our own time ?

We may apply it in the first place to the worship which is often offered to creeds. Creeds are good, and he is but a shallow fool who thinks it clever to ridicule and despise them, as he would have been a shallow fool who saw nothing noble in the Israelitish reverence for the brazen serpent. Creeds represent the toil and prayer of the wisest and best of men through long centuries. Age after age has bent itself over the sacred book, and has sought to reduce its infinite wealth of teaching to some distinct and definite mold, and if the martyr has served his generation so has the theologian, for without the theologian the martyr had not learned how to die. But when the creed becomes every thing and life nothing, when men think that a sound faith in certain statements of the Church is all that God requires of them, when they make an intellectual assent to articles of faith the binding test of the Church, and disfranchise from the charity of God and fellowship of man all who dare to differ from them, then the creed has become an idol, and it is time for it to be broken.

Then some new Hezekiah is sure to rise who will trample it under foot and cry, "It is *Nehushtan!*" And are there not those still among us who burn incense to the creed? Have not men a fatal knack of transferring their allegiance from God to the creed? Was it not a fanatical worship of the creed which led Calvin to burn Servetus; and in this what was he better than a Bonner or a Gardiner, who burned men and women by scores because they could not believe in transubstantiation? These scenes are apt to reproduce themselves in history, in spirit if not in form, and then what the age wants, and what the occasion is pretty sure to develop, is a Hezekiah who will boldly take up the piece of twisted brass and will say, "Beautiful as it is, or sacred or memorable, it is but a thing of man's devising after all, and we can live without it; it is *Nehushtan*—a piece of brass!"

The same thing may happen in regard to even the Bible itself. We may fanatically worship it as a book, as a book which is to be accepted without question down to its very commas and head-lines; and then God is bound to teach us, perhaps by means that may be very startling to us, that it is not a book which we are to worship, but him, the living and eternal One. It is quite possible for men to

fight eagerly for the inspiration of the Bible and yet to know little of God; to hate heresy more than they hate wrong; to defend inspiration in such a way that it is clear they know nothing of that inspiration of divine charity which should breathe through their life. Be sure the book in itself will as little save us as the creed which is based upon the book. There are thousands of persons who read the Bible every day in formal family worship, and are ready to fight for the Bible, and are angry to hear a single verse of it questioned by even the most reverent scholarship, who, nevertheless, are mean and covetous and unchristlike in every detail of their daily life, so that the Bible is really to them as much a fetich as the brazen serpent was to the people of Israel.

The same truth applies to all forms of worship, and applies even more cogently. Sometimes the liturgy or the sacrament becomes the fetich, sometimes the man. And then it is that in some great and terrible way God has to teach us that neither man nor liturgy shall stand between him and the living souls of men. He who has preached to others himself becomes castaway, and lips that have spoken the sacramental absolution are soiled with the mire of public shame. History is full of such lessons, and they abound in the records of the

individual life. The very best and noblest things may be perverted, and there is no surer way of perversion than the substitution of institutions for God, faith in things for faith in the Eternal. When men get to think that there is only one right way of government, or only one man who can govern them, then the throne is suddenly overturned, or the pillar on which a nation rested is snapped. When Englishmen paid such an idolatrous reverence to the crown that they said they would "fight for it though it hung upon a bush," then a Cromwell arises, who thrusts king and crown aside with mailed hand; and when Puritan England thinks that none can govern her but Cromwell, then Cromwell dies, and leaves no successor. When men rest in purposes and ambitions which stop short of God, then God sweeps away their wealth in a moment, and teaches them that it is after all *Nehushtan*, a piece of brass, by no means needful to a worthy and a noble life. From first to last God's interferences in history, by which we mean those mighty movements which the least serious have felt to be the hand of God, and God's great men who have been raised up to do his will, have taught the same lesson. He can govern through kings or without them; he can teach men by symbols or without them;

the Lord gives and the Lord takes away; but the one voice of thunder, which never ceases to reverberate through the lives of men, is the voice of the great I AM, uttering the primal command, "I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt have no other God before ME."

If these lessons are difficult to learn, let us remember that there are none more needful. We all have an instinctive dread of falling into a stereotyped life, have we not? We delight in freedom, variety, spontaneity. It is the very salt of human life that it is individual; it is the secret of its charm that it perpetually flows into fresh molds and assumes new shapes. History is a great panorama wherein customs, ideals, manners are always changing, and it is this evolution from barbarism, this endless growth and change, which is the secret of its spell. Literature takes different forms in different ages, and then exhausts them, so that each age must write its own books and learn to utter its own thoughts in some new fashion which is native and natural to it. Science knows no sameness; it puts forth fresh flowers in every age, and becomes more marvelous with the fullness of its revelations in each succeeding generation. Are, then, the forms of truth and religion alone to remain

stereotyped? Is God alone to be unvaried in his methods of teaching men and guiding them and revealing himself to them? Is the world of religious thought alone to be unfreshened with any spirit of change which passes over it like a heavenly wind, leaving freshness and fertility behind it? No; God also refuses to be stereotyped. He chooses to address each generation with a living voice and to clothe his message in fresh and fruitful forms. The breaking up of old forms means the inflowing of new life, and "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." In the eighteenth century it is the evangelical revival, or Methodism, which breaks asunder old forms with the expansion of a new life; in the nineteenth century it is the Salvation Army; and when either becomes stereotyped God will not fail to invent some other and better thing. Let us have faith in God then. What though the tumult and clangor of opinion wax loud and louder round us! From the hall of unjust judgment and the strife of tongues there is a Voice which speaks on, calm and undismayed, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." What though we stand amid the wreck of systems and institutions which vanish away! God

owns himself the author of the ruin; he calls us to see the desolations which he hath wrought in the earth; he puts his hand upon our complaining mouths, and says, "Be still and know that I am God;" and when he removes it our lips are cleansed, our heart is quieted, and we cry, "God is our refuge and strength; therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

In our regulation of Christian conduct and policy the same lesson needs to be learned. Customs not less than forms of truth become *Nehushtan*, and have to be cast aside. Society changes, offering new problems, new vices, new difficulties, and then the attitude of Christianity must change too. The only real heresy, the one deadly sin of which Churches are capable, is to forget that we serve a living Christ, who is hourly instructing us, who orders the campaign and disposes the battle. We are not bound by the words of Jesus spoken in Galilean ears so much as by his spirit and temper, and the messages our own hearts receive. If it be the mere recorded words of Christ that bind us, then we may fairly argue that Christ was not upon the side of total abstinence, nor against slavery, nor for the emancipation of woman. Where has he even

named such things? And why has he not done so? Why has he not given us as distinct a prohibition of the use of wine as Mohammed? Take the mere words of Christ, and make them the exact standard of morals, and use them in their narrow, legal, inelastic limitations, and you destroy Christianity. You erect an exegetical *Nehushtan* upon the grave of Christ. You re-impose the Mosaic bondage of the letter; and that is not how Christ designed to interpret himself to us. No; he has bequeathed us a certain temper and spirit, the temper of renunciation, the spirit of denying ourselves for the good of others, the law of service which demands that even liberties which are natural and legitimate to us should be curtailed if by any means we might save some; and it is that spirit we have to re-interpret in the light of modern needs. It is said that when the fishermen, toiling on the banks of Newfoundland, find the masts and rigging so encumbered with ice that the ship's uses seem half lost, they head for the gulf-stream, which is but a few score miles away, and there, in a few hours, every trace of winter disappears, and the ship is herself again, shaking out her sails to the wind like a bird that feels the touch of summer on her wings. And so it is when we pass from a literal to a free and spir-

itual interpretation of Christianity. The ice melts in the gulf-stream of a larger life, and the Church that seemed a dead thing, incrusted with useless traditions, becomes a living force for the rescue and the help of men. Let the form melt; let it be ours to know the spirit and to recollect that we have simply to live our Christianity as we think Christ would, had he lived in the nineteenth century, and any thing that comes between us and the realization of that divine ideal is a *Nehushtan* which must be trampled under foot.

And so, again, this living Christ is the only warrant of a living Christian ministry. If the minister be not, in truth, a prophetic man, who hears the heavenly voices and interprets them, he is no minister. It will not serve him merely to reiterate, however eloquently, the outworn thinking of a system which has vanished away. And we may ask, indeed, how can he do so—how can he dare, or be content, to do so, if he believes that the living God is still speaking to the living minds of men, and has his distinct messages, which it is the mission of the true minister to utter to his people? For the book of God is not a book—something consisting of so many chapters and parables and ethical instructions; but the word of God, a series of living inbreathed

messages, uttered afresh to every true and humble-hearted teacher. That was a wise saying of an old minister to a young one, who had complained that after three years' preaching he had exhausted the interest of the Bible: "Young man, sink your shaft deeper, and you will come to water." True, I have felt, as I suppose every man who endeavors to instruct his fellows may feel at times, as though I had reached the limit of my teaching, as if I had nothing more to say and the utmost boundary and horizon of my poor knowledge were touched. And there has lain the open Bible before me, with the old familiar texts, but no voice, no music, no light in any one of them. So I have sat, sterile, silent, incapable of thought; and then it has been as if a subtle music suddenly breathed and trembled through the stillness of the room, and a light has shone, and Christ has told me something quite new, something I never dreamed of in my life before, something which I could not have understood till that moment, because until then I had no experience by which to interpret it. O think of it! For century after century men have been preaching from these scanty biographical remains of Jesus, this tithe of parables, this little handful of ethics, aphorisms, incidents; and yet the words are newer,

deeper, diviner to-day than ever they were. So I know, then, that if Christ says nothing to me it is not because he is not speaking, but because I am deaf and do not hear. He has many things to say to us, but we cannot bear them now; we need sorrow to interpret some, and temptation to interpret others; for some the silence of the house of langour, for others the still more solemn silence of the house of death; but, most of all, the obedient and responsive spirit without which we cannot interpret any. The Bible is a newer book to me to-day than when I first opened it to preach my first poor sermon. I think that I can preach to-day as I could not have preached ten years ago, and if God gives me grace and life I shall hope to preach in ten years' time as I cannot preach to-day. And one thinks of the closing words of Maurice. When his wife told him, as he lay dying on Easter Sunday, that it was the hour for service, he said, "Ah! I shall never preach again on earth, but, please God, I intend to go on preaching in the worlds that are beyond."

Some of you, perhaps, are full of alarm at the broken creed, the broken symbol, or the broken man. You witness with failing heart the destruction of symbols and the dissolution of creeds. You have leaned upon them, and

they have snapped beneath your weight; or you have leaned upon some human preacher, only to find him faulty like the rest of us, and far better able to preach the truth than to exemplify it. We can conceive with what horror the Israelites would witness the daring act of Hezekiah, and it is with similar horror you watch the things in which you trusted going to pieces, till you seem to stand bare and naked under the very eye of God, with no sheltering or interpreting medium between you and the Eternal. If so, be sure that that is just where God means you to stand. Sacrilegious as Hezekiah's act seemed, it is emphatically said, "He did right in the sight of the Lord," and it may be the truest witness that God is still working in the world that these violent disruptions of creed and symbol do occur. But, whatever is shaken and destroyed, God and your own soul remain. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him need neither "this mountain nor Jerusalem;" they must worship in spirit and in truth. Lift your eyes, then, above the broken symbol to the everlasting God. Beyond the rainbow of the symbol shines the sun of the Spirit, and without the sun the rainbow had not been. Lift your eyes from the broken man to the man Christ Jesus, tempted in all points like as we are, yet with-

out sin. Lift your eyes from the broken creed to him who lives behind all creeds, the Lord, merciful and gracious, the Father who softly calls, "My son, give me thine heart!" Let the broken creed itself be God's ministry to lead you into closer communion with him, and learn to realize how profoundly true are the well-known lines:

> "Our little systems have their day,
> They have their day and cease to be,
> They are but broken lights of Thee,
> And thou, O God, art more than they."

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded through one rose from the dead.—*Luke xvi*, 31.

To fall away from that which has supreme being toward that which has less being, this is to begin to have an evil will. To wish to find out the causes of these defections, when they are, as I have said, not efficient but deficient, is tantamount to wishing to see darkness or to hear silence. Nevertheless, there are both things which we know very well, one by means of the eyes only, and the other only by means of the ears.—*St. Augustine*, *De Civitate Dei*, Book xii, 7.

IV.

THE FAILURE OF THE SUPERNATURAL AS A MEANS OF CONVERSION.

IT is the last word of a conversation beyond the grave which is reported to us in this verse. If we are to realize its solemn force we must first realize that which seldom occurs to us amid the busy vanities and carnalities of our daily life, that there is indeed a spirit-world close to this, divided from it by the thinnest of curtains, and that there is for millions who once lived on this earth, at this moment, a life of conscious thought in that unknown and spectral realm. We have to realize the truth of that quaint saying, "A man is born but not buried, and when he is buried he is not ended." Our friends who once spoke to us with human lips are still speaking, but in another language; they are still suffering and enjoying; they are still the centers in which thought and consciousness and action reside, and the drama of their life, which is terminated here, is being played out upon another stage, before another audience, and in a far more sol-

emn environment. This is the point of view which we must reach before the full effect of this parable can break upon us; and familiar as the parable is, and has been, in the pulpit teaching of centuries, it may be doubted if a tithe of either readers, preachers, or congregations have ever thus become vividly conscious of its tremendous reality.

We have to recollect, on the other hand, that the entire story of Dives and Lazarus is a parable, and therefore is not to be accepted as literal truth in all its bearings. For what is a parable? It is an illustration, and it is seldom that a flaw cannot be discovered in the aptest illustration, and almost impossible that any single illustration shall perfectly express a series of complex ethical truths. The parable is that which takes us out of the world of commonplace fact into the world of the imagination, and it exhibits familiar facts to us through the modifying or transfiguring light of the imagination. It follows, therefore, that a strictly literal interpretation of a parable often destroys its true significance, or so distorts it that the parable may be made to teach the very thing which its inventor would not have desired to teach, and omit the very element of truth which he meant to express.

For if we apply, as is often done, this literal spirit to the interpretation of Christ's parables, what happens? We find ourselves at once entangled in a maze of difficulties. For example, apply such a method to the parable of the prodigal son, and what do we find? We cannot help feeling that if the father in that most touching of all stories is meant to represent God, then there are elements in his character which we could not conceive to be elements of the character of God. For we are not told that the father did any thing to restrain his younger son, that he ever reasoned with him on his conduct, that he ever pointed out to him the folly of his course, or that he ever inquired after his welfare after he had left home, and from these facts it would be quite possible to argue that the God of Christianity is a God who is careless of his children, a cosmopolitan Eli, whose sons make themselves vile and he restrains them not. Or take such an illustration as the story of the unjust judge, who is moved to righteous vindication of the importunate widow, not because her cause was just, but because she troubles him; and if the judge of that parable is meant to be a portrait of the Governor of the universe, then it is impossible to avoid the inference that the Holy One of Israel is not holy, but unrighteous, and

that the Maker of the heavens is not a moral ruler, but an immoral tyrant. Or take the concluding passages of this parable, and we cannot disguise from ourselves, whatever our theological predilections may be, that Dives showed some faint signs of an unselfish spirit in his thought for his brethren, and it is not possible to think of a soul in this state as forever outcast. These are samples of the peril of an exact and rigid interpretation of a parable. And therefore we have to ask how Christ came to speak the parable, at what point in his argument did it occur, what was obviously intended to be its broad and general drift? When we put these questions the reply is simple, for we see at once that what we call the parable of the prodigal son is really the parable of the elder brother, and is meant as a rebuke of Pharisaism; and that all that Christ would teach in the story of the importunate widow is that men will put a perfect passion of patient endeavor into the effort to recover some paltry money-debt, but will scarcely take the trouble to tell God what they want, or ask any thing of him, save with the formal nonchalance of suitors who never expect that he will do any thing for them. Fix your eye on these points of the parable, and you see the pivot on which all moves; miss these, and the

spirit of the parable is wholly lost and ignorantly misinterpreted.

Now this parable has a double ethical teaching, and is aimed at two points. The first of these is the responsibilities of wealth, and, indeed, of all forms of possession, whether amounting to what we call wealth or not. It forces home upon the conscience the truth that a man's use of his property here will shape his destiny hereafter, and that he who has possessed wealth here, and has used it only for personal ends and never for public and social ministrations, dies not merely disgraced, but hopelessly condemned. Before the eyes of every selfish rich man in Christendom this parable stands like a spectral menace. The curtain of mystery which shrouds the future, and which Christ would not lift to satisfy the intellectual curiosities of men, is lifted for a single dreadful instant, that he may teach us our social duty. How many times Christ warned men against the corrupting love of money! How often did he say that a man's possessions counted nothing with God, and were in effect not so much a blessing as a temptation, which made it hard for the rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven! Here is all that he taught cast into dramatic form, and the last act is played out amid the terrors

of hades, where unhealed woes seek an ineffectual relief and the mind diseased finds all ministration impossible. If we were not overwhelmed with the spiritual force of the parable we might pause to notice with what superb power the picture is drawn, with what insight and daring, and with what a marvelous mastery of form and art there is compressed within a dozen sentences a drama which would gain nothing if it were expanded by the hand of genius into a dozen acts. But we have no time to think of this. It is the terrible truth of the representation which awes us and makes us unconscious of the method of its expression. And one wonders, as the solemn sentences of Christ break upon the soul, how it is that for centuries this parable has been read in the ears of selfish and uncharitable rich men without effect, and we see anew how profoundly true was the word of the Redeemer, "Why do you not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word."

But the second truth which this parable is meant to illustrate is the futility of the supernatural as an instrument in human conversion. Now that is not a conclusion which is generally accepted; but I think that it is the distinct meaning of Jesus, and it is clearly in accord

with his own repeated sayings. For Christ did not attach the same importance to miracles that we do. He more than once manifested the greatest reluctance to work them, because he saw that their total effect was to excite the curiosity of men, but not to transform their spirit. He repeatedly told those whom he had healed to tell no one, because he did not wish to be talked of as a necromancer or followed from those motives of idle curiosity which lead men to crowd round a magician. He never worked miracles of mere power; there was always some point beyond the miracle at which he aimed, some moral or charitable end to be reached, some blessing of which the miracle was the divine channel, and which justified it. And, lastly, Christ pathetically appealed to men to believe him for his word's sake; and it was only when they would not do that that he implored them to accept his works as his divine justification. The most, therefore, that the miracles can ever be is a series of glorious banners borne before the armies of the conquering Christ, the splendid symbols and tokens of his kingdom, but not essential to it any more than the symbol of the harp or lion on the flag is essential to the existence of the empire which it represents, or the actual winning of the bat-

tle into which it is borne triumphant. No; the total effect of miracles as an instrument of human salvation is relatively small, and when Dives asks a miracle for the conversion of his brethren the reply is, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Now let us assume the dramatic reality of this picture and examine it. This, or something like it, is what this tortured rich man sees and thinks while he talks with Abraham in the dreadful world of spirits. He sees again the house where he had lived, the deep coolness of the luxurious rooms, the orange-blossoms waving in the court-yard, the splendor and ease of that home where he once had lived, and whose charm had often caused him an exquisite æsthetic joy in the days of his flesh. He sees also his five brethren, who now occupy the palace he has vacated, who are dressed as he was dressed in the soft linen of Egypt and the purple robes of Tyre, who fare sumptuously every day as he had fared on the daintiest food that wealth can purchase, and whose life is in all respects a complete counterpart of what his own had once been. One feature in the familiar scene his brethren do not behold: they do not see the beggar at the gate, for he has gone forever. But they still remember

him. In the old days they could not enter or depart through the court-yard without noticing that huddled mass of misery and beggardom which lay silent at the gate. They knew his features, distorted with disease, perhaps, certainly emaciated with hunger, and the slow corrosion of many bitter thoughts. They probably resented his presence, as did Dives, and they doubtless left him to his unremembered misery. And now, if the plan of Dives can be carried out, this is what he proposes: he will wait for some night when his brethren are all together, and then, just when the feast is over and the lamp is lit, and there is silence in the room, Lazarus—the erstwhile beggar at the gate, whom they well know to be dead—shall stand among them. He shall stand among them not as he was—a glorified Lazarus, yet the same; a ghostly presence, with immortality clothing that soiled mortality of his; incorruption drawn like a shining veil over the old corruption which it heals and obliterates—and he shall reason with them. While the low-voiced talk goes round, suddenly a shudder of alarm shall seize the five feasters, and, looking up, they shall behold the spectral visitor. And then this awful presence shall motion them to silence, and shall say: "I am a messenger from Dives, your brother. I

am Lazarus, who once lay at your gate unhelped. I am now with Abraham in the paradise of God. Dives, your brother, is now tortured in a pit of flame. He lived selfishly, and for this he now suffers the penal fire. You live as he lived, and because of this God has permitted me to be the messenger of Dives, and to warn you of your fate. His scorched lips now breathe through mine—mine that can thirst no more; his agonized soul now utters itself through mine—mine that is bathed in the eternal peace of God; and he bids you beware lest you also come to his place of torment. O, repent, reform, be charitable, be just, be kind; share your abundance with the thousands who are now as I once was; yea, if you will, I can guide you to the hovels where they lie unhelped, for in that brotherhood of misfortune which I once shared we all know each other, and the suffering are known to the suffering when all else, and the happy most of all, forget them." And then the vision would fade away, the mysterious voice would cease, and the sound of the shaken orange-blossoms, lightly stirring in the evening breeze, alone would fill the room with odorous music—and what then? "Then," thinks Dives, "my brethren will repent. They will have had terrific proof of the reality of that spirit-world about which

they and I were alike incredulous, or, at least, never thought. They will rush forth to find the brethren of Lazarus, and will spend their wealth upon the poor and needy. They will open their doors to the dishoused and disinherited, and say: 'Come, for all things are now ready.' The spirit of Lazarus will haunt them and be a wholesome terror, not to be shaken off; and when at last the hour comes they will die as just men and perfect, and will pass to the paradise which I have forfeited." Will they? Will all this happen? Will the single visit of a messenger from hades accomplish so great a reformation?

Cold and clear the voice of Abraham replies: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

That is the reply of Abraham, and the more we consider it the more clearly shall we see that he was right. Dives deceives himself as to the effect of such a supernatural visitation, and if we consider what average human nature is like we shall at once see how and why he is deceived. For, to begin with, one of the strongest and most general impulses of human nature is incredulity about truth, especially when that truth is foreign to men's common thought and at variance with their

common experience. Who believes the revelations of science when they are first stated? No one, or at most "a certain acute and honorable minority;" and it is only by incessant reiteration that they penetrate the average intelligence and at last find general acceptance. Who believes, under similar conditions, the revelations of medicine, of chemistry, of mechanics, of sociology, of discovery? It is the common testimony of history that it takes generations for a new idea to penetrate the popular mind, and that which we all believe to-day has been universally scoffed at in a yesterday not very far removed. And if this be true of ideas, of statements which may be measured by logic, and which appeal to reason, how much truer must it needs be of supernatural revelations? How many people believe in ghosts? How many people can be got to believe the best authenticated ghost-story, and for how long? How many persons would believe in ghosts even though they saw one? How many, and among them the keenest observers, would shrug the sarcastic shoulder and say cynically with Coleridge, that they "had seen too many ghosts to believe in them!"

No; there is another conclusion to the vision of Dives, and a truer one. It is thus that

the story should be finished. Presently the voice of Lazarus ceases, the odorous music of the shaken orange-blossoms is again audible in the room, and the shock of terror and surprise dies away, and the five brethren begin to say: "'Tis a strange thing; is it true?" And the more they think of it the more certain they become that it is not true. Is it likely that a son of Abraham, a Pharisee, a rich man, a magnate in the city, is in torment, while Lazarus, a nameless beggar, is in paradise? Is it likely that Dives would send such a messenger even if he had such a message to communicate? Ghosts! What are ghosts? Who would divide his property with the poor at the bidding of a ghost? It is a trick that some one has played upon them; a cunning and well-acted trick got up in the interests of beggardom; a socialistic ruse of the proletariat to extort money from their masters; a clever trick, no doubt, but they can see through it, and he would be a fool who could not. So they pass from terror to suspicion, from suspicion to incredulity and anger, and when a night's rest has lulled the brain, and they have once more seen the honest daylight, they can even laugh at the whole thing, and the next night they will feast again in the same room, in the same way, with scarce a thought of Dives, and no

thought at all of Lazarus. That is the true sequel of the vision; that is what would happen with any of us; for if we do not discern God's will and God's vindication in the normal and natural, be sure of it we should see it still less in the supernatural; if we hear not Moses and the prophets, neither should we be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Look once more, and you will see that in another respect also Dives is mistaken. Not merely does he overlook the natural incredulity of man in regard to the supernatural, but he forgets that if a man is to be good he must be good under normal conditions, and has no right to ask for abnormal revelations as a help to the most elementary conditions of good conduct. It is related that Heine and Hegel once dined together, and after dinner the poet and the philosopher walked out upon the balcony and looked at the stars. There rose the "majestical roof fretted with golden fire," like a profound polished dome in which the lamps of God burned, and Heine, touched with the starry splendor, began to speak of the planets as the homes of the blessed, and, in reply to the contemptuous sneer of Hegel, said: "What! is there no blissful spot above where virtue is rewarded after death?" Hegel turned his dim eyes upon the poet, and said: "So you

want a reward because you have supported your sick mother, and not poisoned your brother, do you?" Bitter as the reply of Hegel is, it points the lesson which Dives had overlooked. God will not bribe us into virtue by visions of heaven, nor frighten us out of vice by visions of hell. Heaven and hell are not the alternate sweetmeat and rod of an incapable celestial school-master. In the normal conditions of our life there is enough to teach us how God would have us live, and there are ministries more than enough to enable us so to live, if we will use them. We have truth enough and light enough to live by already, and a visible ministry of angels could tell us nothing that is not already told us by human lips, by the records of history, by the promptings of natural affection, by our conscience, and by the Spirit of God, who reveals the things of God severally to every man as he will. If you will not be honest where you are and with the knowledge you have no ministry of angels could teach you honesty. If you cannot find God in the ordinary services of the Church no risen Lazarus would convert you. If in the normal conditions of human life, which have been sufficient to foster the heroism, the unselfishness, the constancy of long generations of saints and philanthropists and martyrs, you

cannot be a good man, under no abnormal conditions would you ever be a better man than you are. If you hear not Moses and the prophets neither will you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Look yet again, and you will see that what Dives says is in effect an apology, and a feeble one, for the selfish conduct of himself and his brethren. It amounts to this: "If I had known—if they could know." It implies that, through no fault of his, he has made a ruinous mistake in the conduct of life, and now, through no fault of theirs, his brethren are about to repeat the tragic error. And upon whom, then, is the fault to be visited? Who is responsible for the error which has brought Dives to this place of torment? The inference is plain: if the blame does not rest on Dives it rests on God. For the words of Dives amount to an accusation of the Almighty, and the accusation is that he leaves his creatures with an insufficient revelation of his will and then punishes them for unintentional and unblameworthy disobedience. If Dives had known his duty he would have done it; if his brethren knew their duty they would do it; if neither knew, then the lack of knowledge is the fault of God, who failed to enlighten them. It is a frightful accusation, but it is as old as the world. Men

will blame fate, heredity, environment, their circumstances, their temptations, and last of all their Maker, but never themselves, for the ruin of their lives. The literary biography of the world is full of such apologies. Only the other day I read in the press notices of a certain dead playwright, whose life was notoriously immoral: "For his shortcomings he was not responsible; he was the victim of his organization." It is a convenient excuse, under which every thief, every murderer, every whoremonger may find ample shelter. And if we admit the philosophy of Dives to be correct, then it is quite fair to argue that perhaps in the case of the murderer and thief and the whoremonger the revelation is not clear enough; something more startling and terrific is needed to impress such natures; if one rose from the dead these too might have believed. And since these are but typical instances of moral callousness we must needs go further, and claim that a special spectral revelation ought to be made in each particular case where sin abounds. We are all ready to assure ourselves that some such terrific experience of the spirit-world as this would at once arrest, transform, and convert us. We can all think of cases where, if the dead wife could appear to the profligate husband, or the dead mother to

the reckless lad, it might prove a means of divine redemption. In other words, what we begin by demanding as a special infraction of law to meet a special case we should soon be demanding as a normal element in the affairs of the soul; and if commerce with the dead were as normal a condition of life as converse with the living, how long would it be before such ministrations would be dismissed with as contemptuous a pride as the ordinary human ministrations which seek to turn the sinner from the error of his ways? Where the law and the prophets fail would the ghost succeed? If every man had his ghostly visitor, what reason is there to suppose that he would, in the long run, treat the messenger from hades or paradise with any more respect than he treats his conscience, which is the messenger of God within him?

"You have Moses and the prophets," is the answer to such an accusation, and it is a sufficient answer. The law of Moses, in a hundred particular and specific instructions, commanded charity, social help, sympathy with the unfortunate, benevolence toward the suffering; and the prophets, in a hundred passages which still roll like judgment-thunder on the ears of the world, denounce the man who adds land to land and house to house, and

cares little for the poor man's rights, and still less for his wrongs and sorrows. That is the answer God makes us, and it may find its application in many forms. If we say to God, "Who is my neighbor?" the reply is, "The human heart will instruct you, for the revelation of love, and the duty of love, is made to every man, nor can any one misunderstand the revelation who desires to profit by it." If we complain of the intellectual difficulties of Christianity, God's reply is that at least the revelation of duty is made to every man, and he who does his duty as far as he knows it, honestly, fully, sincerely, is a worker of righteousness, and is accepted of God. If we complain that darkness rests over vast regions of the world of thought, and that in that darkness we are bewildered and perplexed, God replies that some portion of the truth, at least, is revealed to every man, and Christ says that all who are "of the truth," honest truth-lovers and truth-seekers, will hear his voice. The revelation of love, of duty, and of truth is made in some form to every man; these are the law and the prophets which, if we obey, will make for our salvation. We do know, and nothing but our own willful and wicked error can prevent our knowing, the essentials of right conduct and wrong, the things which make for our peace or

our eternal sorrow and condemnation. We do know that we ought to be kind and loving and charitable; that it is our simple duty to be truthful and sincere; and that is the law and the prophets written on the fleshy tablets of every man's heart. We may know much more than this, but the question is not how much we know, but how much of our knowledge we put into practice. We may believe in a hundred doctrines and dogmas; we may accept the death of Christ, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the soul, literally and fully; but unless we practice what we know of love, of duty, and of truth, we shall be in just the same position as Dives, who as a Pharisee accepted all the law and the prophets, and yet lived in such a spirit as to merit the place of torment. The morality of conduct is that without which no soul shall see God, and there is no possible form of religion or redemption which can rescue a man from the hell which his own daily conduct is preparing for him. Do not deceive yourselves. However much the free grace of God may do for us, it does not permit us to escape the morality of conduct, and the beatitudes of Jesus are not uttered in a single instance on the man who believes something, but always upon the man who *is* something.

This saying of Christ's may be said, then, to declare the minimum of what a religious man must be. But if it be the minimum, it is the irreducible minimum. To possess all the virtues which Dives so conspicuously lacked, to be just and good and charitable, is the minimum of religion. Without these virtues you cannot even understand religion; you will be as blind and callous as Dives was, who had known the law and the prophets all his life, and yet had never perceived that they had any actual bearing on his daily conduct. The inference which Christ permits us to draw from his words is that if Dives had acted differently toward Lazarus he might have been saved; and it is, therefore, fair to argue that the just and good man, whoever he may be, will not fail to be accepted by that God who daily scrutinizes the conduct of men and is himself good and just. But one thing, at least, is certain, that if we are not good and just we shall not be saved; nor, if we are unsympathetic and selfish as Dives, are we saved, though we may say so a thousand times with glib insistance and make the church ring with the emphasis of our so-called "Christian testimony."

And once more: if we are not saved it will not be because of an insufficient revelation.

The demand for a revelation of God's will which shall be fresher, clearer, more personal and supernatural is a mere subterfuge by which we conceal our contempt for the revelation which is already given. If at this moment in our midst one rose from the dead and said, "All that this man has spoken is solemnly, tragically, eternally true," I should not expect a single conversion which would be worth any thing as the result of that attestation. If now Lazarus and Dives were actually revealed to us, the one carried like a tired child in Abraham's bosom, the other like one of Dante's figures lifting his charred hands out of the unquenchable flame, I should not expect any one to believe in Christianity to-morrow morning who does not believe in it at this moment. And why? Because the supernatural has always failed to convert men. Like the friends of Hamlet, men are always ready, when the dreadful vision fades, to question its reality and explain away its significance. Pharaoh looked upon the supernatural in the most appalling forms of death and pestilence and terror, yet he hardened his heart more and more. There was a Lazarus who was raised from the dead, yet even after that the Jews sought to kill him. All the miracles of Jesus could not save him from the cross; indeed,

they did but whet the cruel anger of his enemies. Even his resurrection wrought no change of view among those who had crucified him. He rose from the dead, and they were not persuaded. No; it is not more proof we want, but more honesty in practicing the truth we already know. It is not the intellectual difficulties of Christianity which keep men from Christ; more frequently it is insincerity and secret sin, and the intellectual difficulties of Christianity are simply thrust forward as an excuse for something wrong in the conduct which they are eager to conceal. You may be imperfectly enlightened, but you can live up to the light you have; you may be uncertain about theological dogmas, but you can practice the practical virtues you are sure of; for if you hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.—*John xi*, 16.

I think it al'ays the plan in a dilemma to pray God and walk forward.—*George Meredith.*

Do the duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a duty! Thy second duty will have already become clearer.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

V.

HEROIC DOUBT.

JESUS is about to do his duty, and the only one of his disciples who is willing to stand by him is the man who has earned the title of the doubter. As knowledge increases and civilization becomes more complex those of the doubtful mind will become more numerous, and the need for dealing with them wisely will become the urgent duty of the Church. What can the Church say to the doubter? There is only one clear and immediate counsel that can be given: Do what you can with your doubts, but do your duty. The case of Thomas called Didymus affords us an excellent object-lesson of all that is conveyed by such counsel, and is, therefore, eminently worth our study.

In the incident which is thus related by St. John we have another instance of Christ's own consecration to duty, his sublime sense of destiny, and his consequent fearlessness and absolute serenity. We are apt to smile at men who talk about the star of their destiny, and who have faith in themselves and their mission;

but why? Simply because our own lives are so desultory and devoid of mission. For however often such words may have been found on unworthy lips, nothing can impeach the fact that the great conquerors in the world's battle have always been men who were possessed with the sense of destiny. Napoleon, when he nourishes his ambition in obscurity with the sense that he has a great part to play; Disraeli, when he tells a hostile House of Commons that they will hear him one day; Luther, Knox, Newman, and a score of lesser names in every sphere of action, might afford us examples of the sense of destiny and what it can do for men. In each the ambition is directed to a different object, in each the quality of the ambition differs; but in each the sense of destiny produces calmness, courage, resolution, a contempt for danger and defeat, a high heroic beating of the pulse, a serenity of temper, a composure of spirit, a definiteness of outlook, which in themselves go far to realize the object contemplated. And we cannot but look on and admire; we feel that those who could conceive such purposes deserve to be the masters of the world.

In a diviner degree, in an infinitely nobler fashion, this sense of destiny was the strength of Jesus. "Are there not twelve hours in the

day?" he says. "I work to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day." These are the breathings of an heroic spirit; they discover for us the intimacies of the heart of Christ. He is from the first not merely conscious of his mission, but of its tragic close. He is never deceived by temporary popularity. He knows too well that he brings not peace, but a sword. He has settled matters with himself, and knows that he will die. But he is equally conscious of two other things: first, that his teaching will live; secondly, that he will not die till his mission is complete. Before the inward force of this faith and resolution all mean obstacles vanish, and he moves through the world as one who has already overcome it. It invests him with a certain indefinable awe. More than once his disciples are amazed and afraid, for a certain unearthly dignity clothes him, a radiance of inexpressible majesty streams from him. And throughout all the troubled close of life his resolution stands out in clear contrast to their timidity, vacillation, and lack of vision. It does so in this instance. He is returning to Judea, and all they can think of is the peril he incurs. Their love betrays their duty, as love so often does. They would fain keep

him from the grave of Lazarus, if they can thereby shelter him from harm. One only of the disciples shows a nobler temper. He has no clearer conception than the others of the ultimate meanings of Christ's mission, but he can recognize the heroism of Jesus and can share it. He knows, at least, that his place is his Master's side, whatever happens, and with despairing courage he cries, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Now, we are apt to think of Thomas by a single isolated incident, and we do not see the unity of his character. By one of those strange miscarriages of justice which the slightest care might have prevented Thomas is usually pictured to us as a hard and unemotional man—the man of intellect, as opposed to the man of feeling. It is akin to the error which speaks of Gallio as a cynic, which is the very thing that he was not. That the spirit of Thomas was a questioning spirit is clear, but that it was hard and unemotional is the very reverse of the truth, as any one might know who thrills to that heart-breaking cry of his in the presence of the "wronged and risen Lord." If any man loved Christ with a passionate love it was Thomas. What more can a man do than be ready to die with Christ? Has not Christ himself said that to lay down one's life for a

friend is the consummation and glory of all sacrifice? It is not from the purely skeptical character that such outbursts of enthusiastic devotion come. And it is this fact that makes it worth our while to investigate the character of Thomas. It is not a simple character like Peter's, and for that reason Thomas has been misjudged. Men have not taken the trouble to understand him, because they usually prefer hasty generalization to the close analysis of a complicated character. But the truth is that most characters are complicated. We are none of us altogether sheep or goats. We have no right to anticipate the last assize in our judgments of men, and the last judgment, be sure of it, will not ignore those complications of character in which qualities and the defects of qualities are inseparably intertwined. We may safely say that no man's character is only black or white; there are a hundred gradations of color, which are visible to God if not to us, and the justice of God will take cognizance of these.

The first thing which we discern in Thomas is the union of intellect and emotion, the keenest intellect with the quickest emotion. He is a man who has intellectual vision; he cannot make his judgment blind, and dare not if he could. It is to Thomas that Christ

addresses the great words, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" and perhaps Christ meant in doing so to recognize the intellectual integrity of Thomas. He is one who can see the truth, who loves the truth, who will before all things be loyal to it. For him to love the truth is life, and the way of truth is the one way he will tread. Can we say that of ourselves? Of how many can it be said? How few are those who keep their intellectual honesty wholly unimpaired! How great is the temptation to permit a little self-delusion, a little sacrifice of exactness, a little touch of sophism in our view of things, a little intellectual compromise in our way of putting things! Who does not find that a little accommodation of principles, a little judicious reticence, a little delicate casuistry are excellent things to smooth away the rough edges of life; but that plain truth is a very difficult coin to get changed in this world's market? We know these things, but we know also that in perfect loyalty to truth alone is salvation, self-respect, honor. We all have sufficient moral vision to know where truth lies. There is not a man among us who can honestly say he wants more light. What we want is more fidelity to the light we have. We have light enough to walk without stumbling; if we stumble it is

because we have chosen darkness rather than light. We never really need any one to tell us what our duty is; we know it without telling. We never need to be introduced to the truth; the truth has already introduced itself to us. But we do need men to enforce duty and declare and impress truth upon us, simply because there are so few of us honest enough to accept truth without scruple when we know it to be truth. And because Thomas is a sincere man he has the clearest view of truth. He sees with bitter distinctness what the life of Christ means, in its earthly aspects. He needs no one to tell him that Christ means not peace, but a sword. He is under no pleasant delusion as to the results of Christ's interference in the lives of men. He sees clearly—he will die; he feels deeply—let us also die with him.

And I say again that it is a most false and imperfect generalization of character which ignores this union of intellect and emotion in men. We speak too often as if the servant of truth could never be the servant of love, as if the two were wholly separate and incapable of union. The typical man of emotion we picture to ourselves in a man who intellectually cannot see an inch beyond his nose. Generations of perverted emotionalism in religion have impressed it on the minds of men that

the rudest form of feeling is superior to the noblest form of thought. It is the same with our common judgments of people in daily life. We assume that the man of culture must needs be cold, that the cultured woman cannot be lovable. We might be supposed to believe that the training of the mind meant the choking of the fountains of emotion, and that the more a man knew the less was he capable of love. It is this error in relation to women that Olive Schreiner so finely rebukes in her great romance, when she says: "Do they see nothing, understand nothing? It is Tant'Sannie (the gross unthinking Boer woman) who buries husbands one after another, and folds her hands resignedly, and says, 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away'—and she looks for another. It is the hard-headed, deep thinker who, when the wife who has thought and worked with him goes, can find no rest, and lingers near her till he finds rest beside her. A great soul draws and is drawn by a more fierce intensity than any small one. By every inch we grow in intellectual height our love strikes its roots deeper and spreads out its arms wider." That I take to be the exact truth and nobly put. There never was a more foolish error than to suppose that the finest forms of emotion go with the poorest

quality of intellect. It is Thomas, whom we call the Doubter, who is overcome with emotion at the thought of the peril of Christ, and says: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When we have, then, to deal with men of keen intelligence, do not let us assume that they are sterile in emotion. Do not let us suppose that the questioning mind is the sign of the callous heart. Men have a right to ask questions, and to expect us to answer them. We have no right to ignore the demands of the intellect in religion. If we do we ourselves justify the contemptuous criticism which regards Christianity as a thing fitted only for fools and fanatics, for the imbecile and the narrow-browed, for the intellectually halt and lame and maimed of the human race. To ridicule the doubter, to jibe at his difficulties, to rave with illogical anger at "modern thought," is not merely to prove ourselves fools and worse, but is to betray the cause of Christ. Nothing is more certain than that Christ set an example entirely opposite. How patiently he reasoned with his disciples! How he tried to make things clear to them! With what intellectual sympathy does he talk with Nicodemus, and the rich ruler, and the woman by the well of Sychar! In what a spirit of tenderness does he treat the man who could

only say, "I believe: help thou my unbelief!" There is no touch of intellectual arrogance in Christ, no attempt to stifle the honest questionings of men, no desire to dethrone the reason for the sake of the emotions. He was the way, the truth, and the life; not one, but each and all. He was the way—the perfect example of character and conduct; the life, the mysterious source of life in others, communicated in ways which the intellect cannot define; but he was also the truth, the lover of truth, the witness of truth, the martyr of truth; and therefore whensoever he found a love of truth in others he respected it, and preferred the sincerity of honest doubt to the shifting emotionalism which cries, "Lord! Lord!" and kept not his words. He teaches us that the claims of the heart and intellect are not rival, but equal claims. To neither must be yielded too much. It is not by blind and unintelligent emotionalism we best serve God, and still less by mere intellectual acquiescence. To the heart we say, "I must not only feel, I must know;" to the intellect the reply of the heart, heard amid all the sorrowful bewilderments of life, is,

> "Ay, tho' thou then should'st strike him from his glory,
> Blind and tormented, maddened and alone;
> Even on the cross would he maintain his story,
> Yes, and in hell would whisper, *I have known.*"

And the will of God is neither the salvation of heart nor mind alone as separate factors, but that the whole soul and spirit and body be consecrated unto him, which is our reasonable service.

We find again in Thomas the union of faith and doubt, the one expressing the thought of the heart, the other of the mind. He doubts the wisdom of Christ's decision to go into Judea, and in this doubt all the disciples share. But he has the faith that works by love, and he has the love which casts out fear, and makes him ready to die with Christ. The doubt of Thomas is the despondence of a great spirit. It breathes like a gentle sigh through that other saying of his, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" He was, perhaps, one of those men through whose natures a vein of tender melancholy runs. Such men are like delicate musical instruments, the brilliance of whose tone suffers by the slightest change of temperature; they often suffer by the physical oppression of the robust, who little know how their unsympathetic brusqueness sets sensitive nerves jarring, and how their rough touch sets old bruises aching; their life moves in an orbit where transitions are rapid and frequent; they have their bright moments and their dark;

they are of unequal temperament; they receive all impressions acutely because they are acutely sensitive; their joy is ecstasy, their suffering is agony, their disheartenment is despair. Think of such men as Dr. John Brown, the author of *Rab and His Friends*, in whom humor and melancholy lay so close together; of Charles Lamb, whose laughter is the foil to such unutterable despair; of Coleridge, with his gleams of celestial light breaking out of bitter darkness; of Johnson, with his sturdy faith ever struggling through the inertia and gloom of hypochondriac fancies; of Cowper, who can write with such delicate humor, such freshness of touch, such inspired faith and joy, and yet can die saying, "I feel unutterable despair." Think even of a man of action, and heroic action, like Abraham Lincoln, whose laughter was the relief of hereditary brooding melancholy, and was, as he said, "the vent," which saved him from a frenzied brain or broken heart. Such men may furnish us with a hint of what Thomas, called Didymus, may have been. I think that his, too, was a tender, brooding, intensely sensitive nature. He dwelt in the exceeding brightness or the blackness of darkness. His quick intelligence perceived things with an infinite clearness of vision, and they were things which often he

would rather not have seen. He had none of the blindness of Peter to the shadow of coming events. He never debated as John did who should be the first in the kingdom. He followed Christ because he could not help it; but he knew it was to judgment and death. He doubted not because he would, but because he must; and it was out of that cloud of unutterable misgiving that he sent forth this heroic cry, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Surely he has studied history with small effect who has not noticed this frequent despondency of great spirits. Every-where the spectacle meets us, till we are almost justified in concluding that the greater and deeper the nature the more certain is it to know its fits of despondence. Does not Isaiah cry, "I have labored in vain," and Elijah, "O Lord, take away my life, I am not better than my fathers," and St. Paul contemplate the awful possibility that he himself may become a castaway? Who is not familiar with the saying of Marcus Aurelius, "I shall die, and people will say, 'We are glad to get rid of this schoolmaster;'" and of Roger Bacon, "Men are not worth the trouble I have taken over them?" Does not St. Bernard say, "I have done almost nothing?" and does not Calvin confess in

the bitterness of his heart, "All I have done has been worth nothing; the wicked will welcome this word, but I say again, all I have done has been worth nothing, and that I am a miserable creature?" Even so robust and strong a nature as Luther's has its hours of despair, when the reluctant confession is made, "We must take men as we find them; we cannot change their nature." Surely such instances as these should teach us to be sympathetic with the doubtful. It is not your blunt-natured, thick-witted man, who never has a doubt, nor a scruple of misgiving, nor even a momentary questioning of his own infallibility, who is the highest type of believer, or the one most to be admired. The man who tells me, "I never had a doubt in my life, sir," rather reveals a deficiency in his own nature than rebukes one in mine. There are moments, no doubt, when we envy his serene assurance, but a little reflection will soon teach us that he is not to be envied. The nobler soul is that which has been made perfect through suffering; which has come up out of great tribulation undismayed; which has been the worst but still believed the best, has touched the deep and yet struggled toward the starry height; the fugitive who has wrestled with the angel in the night and prevailed; the doubt-

ing disciple who from the thick of mortal anguish can cry with the despair of heroism, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." In such there is wrought out a new nature, and to such there is given a new name; for they have wrestled with God and have prevailed.

Think of this, and measure all that it means, and you will see that the doubt of some men is a truer faith than the so-called faith of others.

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half your creeds."

Do not despair, then, ye who doubt. Do not despair when men of different and denser nature utter hard words about you and treat your doubt as though it were a willful and the worst of sins. Christ never said that. Christ could not have said that. A man's real creed is after all only that which he has won for himself by personal struggle, and no other creed is genuine and vital. I can afford a large wardrobe if I do not pay for it, and it is easy enough to have an ample creed if you have accepted it without inquiry and on the assurance of others. But I prefer a shorter creed, if every article of it has been a battle-field where I have overcome and a Bethel where God has met and blessed me. Examine your

creeds and realize how little of them you really believe in your heart of hearts. For in such a self-examination the great rule of Savonarola reigns, and no other: "a man only believes really that which he practices." You believe in Jesus Christ; do you practice his teachings? Do you live his life? Are you of his mind and temper and spirit? You believe in a final judgment; do you conduct your business with the ever-present sense that God will one day examine your ledgers, and demand account of you for the way in which every shilling you possess has been acquired and spent? You believe in immortality; are you living daily as an immortal creature should, as one who is indeed the heir of God and the joint-heir with Jesus Christ? You believe in a heaven of the spirit; are you so shaping your character that heaven may be no surprise to you, but the exact environment for which the spirit of your earthly life has fitted you? It is by such tests alone that all creeds must be tried. It is by the result of such tests that their worth or worthlessness must be ascertained. And therefore I say that a short creed which is real is better than a long creed which has no root in the heart or life; that an honest doubt is often "faith in the making;" that doubt nobly searched and suffered is better than

faith lightly held and insincerely paraded; that to say, "I believe, help thou my unbelief," is a nobler attitude of mind by far than to say, "Lord! Lord!" and do not the words which Christ says.

We have intellect and emotion, doubt and faith, in Thomas; but there is one other combination also—despair and heroism, the doubting mind but the resolved and dutiful soul. He doubts the wisdom of Jesus, but he is not afraid to die with him. A hundred wild thoughts go whirling through his heart, but there is one supreme thought which abides—his place is at the side of Christ, whatever happens. If nothing else is clear, the duty of friendship is clear. Let it be granted that Christ is willful, foolhardy, reckless in his courage; that he is rushing upon certain death; that he is tempting his enemies to violence; that it would be far better for the cause and the kingdom if he would obliterate himself for awhile, if he would be silent, if he would retire into a desert place till this strife of tongues is overpast; all this Thomas honestly thinks and believes; but there is one thing that remains clear, undimmed, absolutely imperative, a star of guidance which no darkness can obscure—Christ is the Master still, Thomas is the disciple, and with Christ he must stand

or fall. He has not eaten the bread of Christ for nothing; he has not dwelt so long in that most tender intimacy to be false now; he has not witnessed the superb courage of his Lord from day to day to become traitorous and cowardly now. Here is a piece of duty, clear, distinct, indisputable. It is not easy to die for a cause in which you believe; Thomas is prepared to die for a cause which to him is doubtful. It is the heroism of the soldier who goes with steady pulse upon the forlorn hope, knowing well that it is forlorn, and that he will never return. Why does he do it? Because he is a soldier, and has a captain, and has learned to obey. It is the higher courage, not the thoughtless daring of iron nerves and animal vigor, but the still, resolved courage of an intensely sensitive soul, conscious of shrinking, of fear, of questioning, but resolved to do right though the heavens fall. You will have heard the story which Napier relates of a young officer riding down into his first battle, with pale face and trembling hand, when a companion, looking at him, said, "Why, man, you're pale; you're afraid!" "I know I am," he quietly rejoined; "and if you were half as much afraid as I am you would run away." That was courage, the higher courage; the flesh failing for fear, every nerve trem-

bling, loosened, unstrung, but the soul resolved and calm, ordering the body to its duty. And that was the spirit of Thomas: he can at least die with Christ.

> "Shall Jesus bear the cross alone,
> And all the world go free?
> No; there's a cross for every one,
> And there's a cross for me."

That is the meaning of Thomas's speech, and the very fact that he thinks that the peril and the cross should be avoided invests with a sublimer glory his sacrifice of self in facing them. Few more heroic sayings have ever been recorded in history than this: "Let us also go, that we may die with him!"

We can all do what Thomas did; we can do our duty. Our doubts and difficulties are not the same as those of Thomas, but they admit of the same solution. He thought Christ mistaken, but he followed him; he followed with an agnostic mind but a loving heart. He could not read the secret of Jesus, nor, in another sense, can we; yet we also can follow Jesus and love him and die for him. For whosoever approaches Jesus Christ is met by four great secrets of Christianity, four great mysteries of the faith: the incarnation, the resurrection, the atonement, and the promise of immortality and redemption through the death of

Christ. We are as unable to grasp these mysteries as Thomas was the need for the cross in the life of Christ; but that is no reason why we should not follow him as Thomas did. Who does really understand these mysteries? Is there any theologian who has actually explained either, or made them possible to the human intellect? Who can compass the idea of God born of a woman, of a crucified one rising on the third day in quickened and liberated life, of a redemption through his death, of personal immortality assured to us through mere faith in him? Intellectually these ideas are impossible, because we have no symbols of thought by which to express them, no data of knowledge by which to compare them. The keener the intellect which applies itself to the task the more certain is it of failure, because the more numerous will be the difficulties which it will discern. And that is precisely where men make so fatal a mistake; they try to force themselves into faith by a process of reason, to apprehend intellectually that which can only be spiritually discerned. And that is where religious teachers blunder also; they make the intellectual reception of these mysteries the condition of the Christian life, and in doing so they ask more than man can give, more than God demands, and make

intellectual arrogance the stepping-stone to Christian faith. It is an attitude for which no justification is possible. I may candidly own that with my intellect I cannot comprehend the incarnation or the resurrection, the atonement or immortality. I can only say—or, rather, my intellect says with complete reverence, with the humility of a true agnosticism —"I do not know." But it does not therefore follow that I am not a Christian, that I do not believe in Christ, that I am not at this moment conscious of his saving power and blessed presence. I may be alive without knowing any thing of physiology; my heart may beat though I cannot tell how it beats, and have never heard of the circulation of the blood. I may be conscious without understanding the philosophy of consciousness; I may think without knowing how thought is generated; I may be a good citizen with but small knowledge of my country's law; and a good soldier with small understanding of imperial politics. And so I may be a good Christian, though I can prove neither to my own nor any other person's satisfaction the credibility of the incarnation, the resurrection, or the atonement. It is not stubbornness of intellect, but humility, that says in such a case, "I do not know." It is not pride, but

honesty, that cries at the feet of Christ, "I believe, help thou my unbelief." I am content to eat of the fruit of life, though I know not how it grew; to drink of the water of life, though I know not by what spring it came; to open my heart to Christ, though I know not by what mysterious process he fills my being. The working knowledge that we need for the Christian life is relatively small. Christianity is not a thing of high philosophies and subtle inferences; it moves along the plane of common life; it proves itself by the silent revelation of its power to save within the heart. It asks of us nothing more than to do our duty in the sight of God, to let our hearts go out in love toward God and man, to recognize in Jesus Christ the type of all perfection, to surrender ourselves to him and seek to be like him by simple faith and daily practice, and thus to rest in him for redemption. You can begin to be a Christian anywhere, for the elements of Christianity are so simple that none is debarred from the attempt. To do justly and walk humbly with your God, to fear him and to work righteousness, to live up to the highest light that he reveals to you, to be ready to be sacrificed with Christ as Thomas was, to be accepted in him, is to be saved, is to be a partaker of eternal life.

Do you remember that most touching passage in which George Eliot describes the great temptation of Maggie Tulliver?

"Many things are difficult and dark to me," says Maggie, "but I can see one thing quite clearly—that I must not, cannot, seek my own happiness by sacrificing others. Love is natural; but surely pity and faithfulness and memory are natural too. And they would live in me still, and punish me if I did not obey them. I should be haunted by the suffering I had caused. Faithfulness and constancy mean something else besides doing what is easiest and pleasantest to ourselves. They mean renouncing whatever is opposed to the reliance others have in us; whatever would cause misery to those whom the course of our lives has made dependent on us."

So she triumphed. Many things may be dark and difficult to us, and so alone shall we triumph.

Here, then, lies the great lesson of such a subject as this. No amount of doubt can remove from us the obligation of duty. A man's first duty is to do right, and properly considered that is his only duty. Do that simply and sincerely, and half the problems which perplex and sting you will recede into the background and be solved of themselves. We

may not be sure of many things, but of this we are always sure—that to do right is always the safe course, the right course, the only wise course. We may walk in clouds and darkness intellectually, but here at least is solid ground.

> "It's wiser being good than bad,
> It's safer being meek than fierce,
> It's fitter being sane than mad.
> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched,
> That after Last returns the First,
> Tho' a wide compass first be fetched.
> That what began best can't end worst,
> Nor what God blest once prove accurst."

There is but one right thing in all the world for any man; do that, for the way of victory is here alone. When you are perplexed by casuistries of conduct; when you are tempted to do things which offer great gains at the price of what seems an infinitesimal loss of self-respect; when you are told "every body does it," as though that made it right, "nobody will blame you for it," as if that altered its essential nature, then there is but one way of conquering the Gordian knot; it is to ask one swift, searching, simple question, Is it right? Is it just? Is it Christlike? and to abide by the result. Most of our difficulties of conduct disappear instantaneously on the asking of

that question. It is like the shrill cry of the bird of dawn before which ghosts and specters of the night vanish; it is the herald of the light.

There is no one of us who cannot apply that talisman, no one who cannot work out his deliverance by its means. Listen, O my soul, to that clear ringing voice of duty; for—

> "He that ever following her commands,
> On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
> Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
> His path upward and prevailed,
> Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
> Are close upon the shining table-lands
> To which our God himself is moon and sun."

To the man who tells me that he does not believe in creeds I reply then, All the more obligation is laid upon you to show the world how much better you can live without creeds than the bulk of men with them. To the man who tells me that he is in doubt as to Christ's teaching or the Church's presentation of that teaching, I reply, You can at least discern the purity, the love, the mind and temper of Jesus, and you can copy them. It is yours to acknowledge him in your daily life as the Master of your thoughts, the inspiration of your conduct, the type of all perfection. You may not speak with tongues, nor know all mysteries; but you may have that passionate, heroic love which

cries, "Let us also go, that we may die with him;" and to have that is to be a Christian, for the Christianity of noble conduct is the only Christianity which is worthy of that sacred name.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.—*St. John xiv*, 2.

The difficulty of so many intellectual men in these days is to know where the intellectual questions end and the purely religious ones can be said to begin. . . . The religious life is based upon authority ; the intellectual life is based upon personal investigation.—*Philip G. Hamerton, The Intellectual Life.*

VI.

THE CANDOR OF CHRIST.

ONE of our best writers, in an excellent monograph on Wordsworth, has quoted certain lines, in which the poet speaks of the advance of age:

> "Age steals to his allotted work
> Contented and serene,
> With heart as calm as lakes that sleep
> In frosty moonlight glistening,
> Along a channel smooth and deep
> To their own far-off murmurs listening."

And in commenting on them he asks, "What touch has given to these lines their impress of an unfathomable peace? For there speaks from them a tranquillity which seems to overcome our souls; which makes us feel, in the midst of toil and passion, we are disquieting ourselves in vain; that we are traveling to a region where these things shall not be; that so shall inordinate fear leave us and inordinate love shall die." It is thus that the spirit of Wordsworth impresses all his readers; it is a spirit of unfathomable peace. No one has better described the effect he produces than Matthew

Arnold, when he speaks of "Wordsworth's healing power." Why is this? What is the secret? The secret is that Wordsworth speaks to a vexed and troubled world as one who has overcome the world. He is one who cared little for its praise and nothing for its blame; he was strong enough to turn from its crowding ambitions without regret, and humble enough to find in simple sights and sounds sufficient joy; and it is this moral fact which gives his poetry such penetrating sweetness, such pervasive calm.

In like manner we may ask what is the secret of that "unfathomable peace, of that tranquillity which overcomes our souls," which we discover in this fourteenth chapter of St. John's gospel? The secret is that Christ also has overcome, but with a victory beyond our computation. He has attained a peace, but so profound and perfect that it lies wholly outside our analysis. It is the peace of God which passeth understanding—that is, we cannot at all realize what it means and is by our understanding. We can feel it, but we cannot explain it. "It lies round you like an atmosphere. It dwells in you like a fragrance. It goes from you like a subtle elixir vitæ." It overwhelms the soul; it is the very peace of God.

Some of the elements of this perfect peace

it is possible for us to distinguish, however. The most casual student cannot but perceive that this calm of Christ springs from conquest of self and heroic allegiance to duty. We are sure that these are elements in the serenity of Christ, because we know from all too bitter experience that two thirds of our common discords and distractions spring from unsubjugated self and neglect of duty. That which men call intellectual doubt is often nothing more than a disease which springs from the unhappiness of self and scorn of simple duty. How often is the doubter an egoist, and, because an egoist, one who shrinks from the homely duties of a common humanity with disdain! How true is it that when all the other devils are whipped out of the soul the one little capering devil of vanity remains and proves more troublesome than all the rest put together! The only real cure of souls is the extirpation of self; then only is it possible for the peace of God to interpret itself to us. It is in the great stream of service to humanity that the leprosy of egoism is washed away, that the irritation of a miserable vanity is healed, that a new self is developed, tremblingly conscious not of personal pains, but of human sorrows, and so the flesh becomes firm and sound again like the flesh of a little child. This is

one lesson of the calm of Christ which is clear to all, and appeals to all; for it is certain that this cloudless serenity can only belong to one who has lost the uneasy sense of self in larger aims and visions; it is in truth a peace that "the world can neither give nor take away."

Yet the fact remains that Christ has overcome. His peace is something that has been won. The obstructions to peace that we feel are obstructions which he, too, has felt. The difficult and disturbing questions that we feel he, too, felt and overcame. If we cannot preach a Christ who knew the limitations and trials of a real humanity, who did actually taste the cup of bitterness which we taste, who was actually, and by no jugglery of words, "tempted in all points," like as we are, "yet without sin"—if we cannot preach this Christ, we have no Christ to preach. No other Christ is serviceable to humanity—to the humanity that doubts, struggles, suffers, and aspires in a thousand daily agonies. We may not be able to explain in the least degree how it was possible for Christ to fathom the temptations of humanity; whether by the actual pressure of evil upon him in daily solicitation, or by the vision of it, in supernatural concision and distinctness, or through the power of a sympathy so keen and catholic that he was able to think

every body's thoughts, to feel every body's feelings, to know by one swift glance into a man's heart what each heart would know of suffering, so that literally the sins of the world were laid upon him, because he felt the process of each man's sin, without sharing it or being stained by it—all this we may be unable to explain, nor is it necessary that we should explain it. It is enough to know that in some way Christ did know, and suffered all that we endure of temptation, of whatever form; that he knew it in its essence, if not in its particular form; and that he vanquished all. And it is this truth which gives such penetrating emphasis to this brief sentence: "If it were not so, I would have told you." It bespeaks at once Christ's knowledge of our intellectual temptations and his candor in treating of them; and it teaches us the duty of candor in relation to the difficulties of faith.

Now, let us examine the spirit and temper of these words, and the first thing that strikes us is a quality which is always rare, and rare even in great teachers—open-mindedness. We feel that we do not stand in the presence of a mere *doctrinnaire*, a dogmatist with a few narrow axioms which he forces on us at the sword's point, but a great-hearted, sympathetic teacher, who admits the difficulties of belief

and the reasonableness of those difficulties. Half the revolt against belief rises from no other cause than the intolerance of believers. Their very certitude irritates us; their strident accent of infallibility disgusts and repels us; their glib dogmatism enrages us. They admit no difficulties where, to the reasonable mind, the way is hedged with difficulty; they hold no parleying with our questionings, be they never so honest and intelligent. For the doubter, contact with such men can have only one result: confirmation in his doubts, and yet further and angrier revolt from accepted platitudes. To such a teacher himself the result is yet more disastrous; it is narrowness of vision and constriction of sympathy. For to be open-minded is to have a mind which is a chamber whose windows stand wide to the universe, looking out upon illimitable distances and receiving impressions from a thousand various sources; to be the reverse of this is to be narrow-minded, to have a mind which is a chamber wherein all the windows but one are jealously shuttered and closed fast against any vision which we do not wish to receive. The one-roomed life has its counterpart in the one-windowed mind, lit only by a narrow sunbeam, and therefore imperfectly lit, and full of inadequacy and confusion.

This was not the mind of Christ, nor was this his temper. His mind was like a broad lake receiving myriads of impressions from shifting clouds and changing skies; not the little basin of water at the bottom of a well, reflecting some isolated fragment of the blue sky and a star or two. He talked with all sorts of men, and in many different ways. He met men half-way in their difficulties by the kindly omniscience of a great sympathy. He divined their thoughts, their lurking doubts, their uncomfortable questionings, and by his sympathy gave them help in uttering them—and conquering them. And now, as he talks to men who see the whole dream of their life vanishing; who feel as if with his dreaded departure every certainty of the present and future is departing too; whose uneasy thoughts flutter over grim depths, and find no resting-place of certainty—now he divines these thoughts, and sympathizes with them, and does not rebuke them. It is as though he said: "I, too, have asked these questions; in my temptations I also have met this angel of darkness and heard this awful whisper at my ear; I know how easy it is to ask, in moments when hope is ruined, when purposes are broken, when life, in its alternate futility, monotony, and brevity seems to mock us, 'Is

there any thing beyond?'—and, behold, what interest have I in deceiving you? 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.'"

Here, then, you see a willingness to face the darkest things in human destiny, and in this the candor of Christ is manifest. Christ knew well that from the beginning of the ages men have asked, Is there a God? Is there a beyond? Is human separation at the grave transient or final? These are questions which are not peculiar to individuals or to abnormal conditions of feeling; every one has asked them, and they have been asked from the beginning. A celebrated Frenchman has painted in glowing colors the spectacle of Lake Geneva, with all its fringe of happy homes, its towns and villages, the glittering robe of civilization which to-day clothes its shores. But then he recollects there was a time when the song of the vintager was not heard, and the time may come again when a profound stillness may clothe these shores where to-day the life of man runs its restless courses. And what then? Why, the lake will still be there, and these mountains, which we are tempted to call eternal as we travel to our quiet resting-places at their feet, will still lift into the blue sky their glittering pinnacles and soaring domes,

untouched by any breath of change or havoc of mortality. So, says he, there are questions which are the alps of thought, the primeval questions which underlie all thought, all hope, all civilization—and these are among them. The savage, trembling at the passage of the storm-wind, which seems the breath of God; the fire-worshiper, bowed before his mountain altar; the Faust of mediæval times, seeking the source of life in his laboratory; or the Hamlet, pouring out the passionate misery of the universal soul in wild misgiving—all these, and not less the men of to-day, ask the old questions: "Is there a God? Is there a beyond?" The cry is repeated in every awakening mind and beside every death bed. He would be worse than foolish who, calling himself teacher of others, ignored such questions or attempted to shelve them with a plausible excuse. Men who are only too bitterly conscious of the futility of life because their highest ideal is being withdrawn from them, who look with fascinated eyes and breaking hearts upon the spectacle of a vanishing Christ, a lost cause, an imminent cross of shame and defeat, may well be asking these questions now. There will come a time when they will ask no more questions, for they will have looked upon the "wronged and risen Lord." But that time is

not yet. This is the hour and power of darkness. Let such questions be asked then. Let the Master himself recall the desert and the devil when this horror of darkness came upon him in the hour before the angels ministered unto him. Let him, in this supreme moment, discover whether these questions are fully and finally answered for him—for him on whom the darkness of Calvary is now gathering, for him who will soon cry amid the infinite blackness, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" That is Christ's thought, and he answers these questions with a sublime sincerity, a triumphant promptitude, a profound and most impressive conviction—"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you."

Do you say, "These questions are rarely asked, and are asked only by exceptional men and women in exceptional circumstances?" I do not think so. Sometimes, as we walk beside the sea, we become suddenly conscious of a solemn momentary hush. The wind has dropped, the tide is full, the hoarse rush of the withdrawing waves is no longer heard, and for a moment or two the world seems filled and flooded with a great silence. So there are occasional moments in every life when the roar of the world is stilled, and in the stillness men

begin to ask themselves the profound questions for which life has hitherto left them no leisure. If such questions intrude themselves at no other time they must come when we are face to face with death for the first time, and see that which an hour ago was sentient and loving now become a thing that is inanimate and corrupt. But men do not wait till death to ask these questions. Listen to this, a cry as ancient as Socrates or Buddha, yet wrung from the soul of a young university student in one of our great cities, and sent me in a letter:

"If a God exist, he wraps himself in darkness; if he exist, he folds himself in silence. Leaning as it were over the edge of being, men strive to pierce the abyss of the unknown; above, below, they strain their sight, but they see nothing; they listen, but nothing strikes their ear; weary, dizzy, they stagger backward, and with the darkness pressing on their eyeballs, murmur 'God.'"

So also the eloquent Frenchman, Naville, to whom I have already alluded, cites a letter from a youth who describes himself walking up and down all night in the moonlight, reasoning out these thoughts for himself, until at last he feels the strife is over; he sees his old, glad, simple life all vanishing, and slowly opening up the vision of his new life—somber,

joyless, unpeopled—and he cries, "The agony of that hour was frightful!" Do not I also know what that agony is, for have I not tasted this cup? And I do not doubt that in some way or manner beyond our thought Jesus tasted it also. In that long preparation for his work, of which we know absolutely nothing, in those thirty years of solitary growth in a town notorious for its wickedness, in that period which for all men is so full of temptation, he must have felt the deadly impact of these thoughts. Is it too presumptuous to picture the youthful Jesus in many a lonely night-walk beneath the moon of Palestine while the village slumbered at his feet, wrestling with these thoughts? Is there not some reminiscence of a conquered past that breathes in these words? Did no earthly cloud roll between the soul of Jesus and his Father; no temptation of earth threaten for an instant that perfect communion, and teach him what the souls of men can suffer when they seem forsaken of God? Yes; he also has leaned out over the edge of being and murmured "God!" He has faced the specters of the mind. He has exhausted every subtlety of thought with fearless sincerity, and now at the last he can say, "There is a God, for I live in him; there is a future, for I have seen it; there is an in-

finite order in the universe, for it is my Father's house; I am in the Father and the Father in me; if it were not so, I would have told you."

Here then is a teacher who, by the common consent of the highest intelligences of the world, is regarded as the divinest, the highest, the purest; surely for us his word is worth something. For while it is true that we must fight out our own intellectual battles, it is also true that it is the work of great teachers to help us in the fight and lead us to victory; or of what use are great teachers? By every standard we may care to propose—and I speak now to those who would apply the most rigid and remorseless analysis to the story of Jesus—we must acknowledge Christ as likelier to find the solution of these problems than we are. Is it not then our wisdom to accept his verdict in humility? "If it were not so, I would have told you;" may we not rest somewhat on that? Even if for the moment, in your whirl of troubled thought, you can grant no deity to Jesus, still is not his word worth some trust, has it not some authority? Can you not at least accept it as the word of a spiritual expert, of one who spoke from a fullness of divine knowledge such as no other has possessed? For every day, in chemistry, in science, in mechanics, we have to receive and trust in

verdicts which we have not worked out for ourselves, and we do so simply because we are fully assured that those who utter these verdicts are competent authorities. When Newton speaks to me on physics or Herschel on astronomy, I believe them ; is it not as reasonable to believe Jesus when he says, " If it were not so, I would have told you ? " Who likelier to know than he? Who ever pierced deeper into the secrets of Deity than he ? Whose word may be more safely trusted than his ? And you who doubt all things, who disbelieve equally in God and immortality, has it never occurred to you that it would be wise to doubt yourself also, and the wisdom of your own conclusions ? Might you not by pushing this process of doubt a little further succeed in doubting your own doubts away ? Are you quite sure that your own faculties are equal to the solution of these questions ? Does not science itself teach us that there are a thousand things lying beyond our vision, and not dreamed of in our philosophy, which are, nevertheless, real and near to us, and are revealed as man's instruments for detecting them become keener and more delicate ? We have had discovered to us rays beyond the solar spectrum which are invisible to us normally; we were ignorant of the ultra-violet rays until

a chemical re-agent made them visible. May it not be at least as likely that but a slight addition to our present powers of spiritual vision and understanding might reveal to us, beyond all doubt, so much of the glory of God as we could bear and live, and of the starry worlds that are his mansions? And if any ever had that added vision, if it be possible for us to conceive of any creature in the likeness of man who has trodden this earth, with the power of looking beyond it, and of piercing the mystery of the unseen, who so likely as Jesus? Who likelier to tell us the truth about ourselves, about the future, about God, and whose word can we more implicitly trust than his? And it is the Christ who, by universal consent, did live the divinest life that earth has ever known, the Christ whose realization of God was so intense that he declared, "I and the Father are one; whoso hath seen me hath seen the Father also;" the Christ whom even his antagonists owned to be a teacher sent from God—it is this Christ who says with solemn emphasis, as he enters on the tragic close of life, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you."

The fact is that we must find a center of authority somewhere if the fabric of religious truth is to be sustained. The private pope-

dom of every man his own revelation is not workable, and is even ridiculously inadequate to the necessity. We must learn obedience and have some source of obedience, for obedience is the law of universal life; even the boundless ocean, as it rolls and swells, moves within "the bonds of a boundless obedience." Where is that center of authority to be found? We have to choose between the individual reason, the Church, and Christ. The first is inadequate because it works to no common end, it announces no common result, it is bounded on all sides by the inefficiencies of ignorance and prejudice. The second fails because it is cumbered with tradition; it is a divided voice, and, like the reason, unites in no common verdict. We are driven, therefore, to the authority of the living Christ for refuge. We must take his word. We must find repose in his complete assurance. We reach and shudder at the least barrier of reason, and there we cry,

> "Can a mere man do this?
> Yet Christ saith this he lived and died to do.
> Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
> Or lost."

We implore, "To whom should we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And he replies, out of the depth of his infinite calm, "There is no other. To this end

was I born that I should bear witness unto the truth. If it were not so, I would have told you."

As Jesus claimed for himself an absolute sincerity, so we claim it in his name. If it be not so, what have we to gain by saying that it is so? What has any man to gain in the end by saying that the thing that is not is? I know to whom I am speaking; I know how commonly it is said that unbiased judgment cannot be expected from those who have a cause to maintain, and that in any case mere personal testimony is worthless. It is enough to point out that such a mode of argument is unworthy of an intelligent man, because it is not argument so much as insult; it assumes that all Christians are either fools or knaves. For myself I deny the imputation. "If it were not so," if I were once honestly convinced that Christianity was not credible, I would acknowledge my error and endeavor to get through the world as best I could without a God. However much I should lose in losing Christ, I should know well that I should gain more in gaining truth. But before I could do this I should have to get rid of more than mere personal testimony—the testimony of Jesus himself, the testimony of the ages, and the living testimony to the sense of God which exists in

the souls of men to-day. There is a moral instinct within us which cleaves irresistibly to Jesus. We say, as James Smetham said, "This must be true. It is impossible that either fool or rascal could have invented the fourteenth of John or the twelfth of Romans. They are honest to the bone." No further voice counts for much when that profound inner voice has spoken. It is not the voice of the reason or the heart, or of any part of us taken separately; it is the voice of our whole self speaking; deep answering unto deep; the soul replying to the soul's master, with the distinctness of a golden bell, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel."

And, surely, to the intelligent man there is an overwhelming force in human testimony, and must always be. To the sincere student there should be something quite as well worth investigation in this phenomenon of belief and conversion as in the stamen of a flower or the armor of a beetle. How is it that an incontestable change does pass over men, turning the drunkard and the profligate, the embittered and hopeless man, into the pure-minded, kindly, and noble-natured man, who henceforth gives to the service of others the powers once squandered in the abuse of himself? How is it that for hundreds of years men have con-

sistently described this change as the result of an impression of God received in the heart, an impression so vivid, so real, so overwhelming that it has literally changed the current of a life and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus? It is at least unscientific and unphilosophic to ignore this testimony, and how much more foolish to ignore the testimony of the ages to God and immortality! For this is the conclusion of one of the wisest men and noblest thinkers of our time, Professor Max Müller, in the last of a series of recent lectures delivered before the University of Glasgow, a conclusion reached only after an exhaustive study of all the religions of the world from the earliest dawn of life:

"We can now repeat the words which have been settled for us centuries ago, and which we learned by heart in childhood, 'I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth,' with a new feeling, with the conviction that they express not only the faith of the apostles or of ecumenical councils, but that they contain the confession of the faith of the whole world, expressed in different ways, conveyed in thousands of languages, but always embodying the same fundamental truth; fundamental because founded on the very nature of our mind, our reason, and our language: That

where there are children there must be a father, where there are acts there must be agents, and where there are many agents there must be a Prime Agent, whom man may know, if not in his own inscrutable nature, yet in his acts as revealed in nature."

Thus do the ages witness to God. Generation after generation has leaned out over that dizzy edge of being, but not without vision, not in utter darkness and forsakenness. For as they have strained outward into that mighty bosom of night something has flashed upon the eye, something has fallen on the ear; a heavenly warmth has touched them, a divine whisper has thrilled them, a silent love has embraced them, and they have cried, "We believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; if it were not so, we would have told you!"

Out of this vision of God and immortality has sprung all that is noblest in human life and aspiration; out of it to-day spring the largest thoughts, the noblest dreams, the saintliest purposes of men, purposes so strong and vital that we refuse to believe that the grave can terminate them. It is not the vision of God only, but of eternal life in God which has cheered men from the beginning. It is the Father's mansions as well as the Father. It

is the place prepared for us as well as the state in which it is prepared. The vision has been narrowed and distorted, no doubt, but a narrowed vision is better than none, and the dream of a heaven never so material is better than the blank outlook where no star of hope burns amid the gloom. I had rather believe in the paradise of Mohammed than the unwaking oblivion of the agnostic. And the belief in God has been distorted too, and men have thought they saw the power, but not the pity; they have seen the Sovereign, but not the Father. But here again even the narrowest conception of God is better than none; for to believe in God is the very sign and note and character of man. It is that belief which makes him man and lifts him above the brute. It is to the refuge of that belief that the torch of reason is meant to conduct him. Let us be thankful for even the most rudimentary faith in God and immortality. However crude or narrow or materialistic it may be, let us welcome it as the evidence of a soul in man. There is no other force that can enable man to stand upright and undismayed beneath the silence of the starry spaces, and in the face of the immutability of nature and the havoc of death. But this force can. It is effectual in the worst crises of life. It is most triumphant when all

things are against it. In all ages men have found it so.

"For ever since from the portal
Of chaos came forth man,
The longing for life immortal
Hath colored every plan.

"Yes, life, new life, is ever
The surety that nature shows,
And to this one law forever
The infinite system goes.

"So close up your ranks, my brothers,
And with hearts too high to fail,
Let us say 'Farewell,' while the others
On the other side cry, 'Hail!'"

Of that vision of Christ's—the universe as God's realm, in which are many mansions, or abiding-places; a realm where each personal life finds its due place and adequate reward; where none is forgotten or neglected, because it is not a governor or monarch only who presides over the vast and peopled spaces, but a Father who is kind to the unthankful also—of that far-reaching, sublime, and comforting vision, I do not now speak. Its elements are the thought of God's variety of provision for his children, and of the individual soul as reaching the precise place or sphere which an eternal wisdom shall assign it. It is the suggestion of an infinite catholicity in God's arrange-

ments; not one mansion, but many; not one general state or sphere, in which myriads of widely separated individualities are crowded, but a place for me, a place for you—the place for which we have fitted ourselves, and where we can best serve God. On all this I may but touch now; but there is one other inevitable suggestion.

"If it were not so," says Jesus, with divine candor and tenderness, "I would have told you." You say, perhaps not with candor, nor with tenderness, nor even with regret, "If it be not so," and you go your way in pride and denial. You turn from Christianity contemptuously, not knowing what it is you reject, and content to reject it upon the flimsiest of reasonings; and therefore to your *If* I oppose another; I say, "What *if* it be true, after all?" What if these sayings of Jesus are absolute and solemn truths? What if it be, indeed, true that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? What if this eternal Power we do not see watches us all the while —this God we deny is indeed he to whom we must render the account of the deeds done in the body? It is easy to say that Christianity may be false; it were wise to recollect that it may be true. And if it be true, if this little life be God's great opportunity bestowed on

us for serving him; if, while we debate and question, the years rush by, and sweep us fast and faster to that white throne, where our wasted opportunities will gather to reproach us—O! if all this be true, terribly true, literally true, tragically true, for each of us, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?"

As we forgive our debtors.—*Matt. vi*, 12.

The working classes are now demanding that Christianity should be tried by the test of its social effectiveness, its power to serve the welfare, physical, intellectual, moral, of the great mass of men.—*Bishop Barry.*

We ought in this life to foster all that makes goodness easier and sets barriers of whatever kind across the flowery way of sin.—*Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.*

VII.

THE SOCIALISM OF JESUS.

THIS is the most difficult passage in the Lord's Prayer, the only passage on which Christ thought elucidation necessary, and which he reiterated and emphasized. If we took it in its literal sense it would be easy to say that it was the utterance of an impossible idealism, and that as a matter of fact it was never acted upon.

The late Edward Fitzgerald did indeed once lend a friend £200, and when interest had been twice paid upon it said, "I think that will do," and flung the note-of-hand into the fire. Shelley also forgave his debts, and when he had little or nothing for himself was perpetually busy in raising loans for his father-in-law —loans which were practically gifts. And these are instances, not of saints or apostles, but of two widely different men, one of whom had nothing to say on religion, and the other of whom attacked Christianity and rejected it. It is perhaps fair, therefore, to assume that there are many other cases which have

never been recorded, and that the forgiveness of debts, in the literal sense, is commoner than we suppose. But at least it must be granted that it is neither the principle nor practice of society, and that of those innumerable millions who daily repeat the Lord's Prayer there is scarcely a percentage who assume that Jesus meant any thing in particular when he bade us pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

But Christ never uttered unmeaning or superficial words, and therefore it is well for us to ask what he did mean. Least of all would he have spoken with impossible idealism in a prayer which he deliberately framed for the use of his disciples and followers through all the ages. Unless we are prepared to say that Christ was wrongly reported, or that he said what he did not mean and did not expect any body to accept as serious, we are bound to assume that Christ had a clear meaning and purpose in his speech, which it becomes us to discover; for the practical impotence of pious ideals in regulating public conduct arises mainly from this very cause, that we perpetually act as though Christ never said what he meant, and rarely meant what he said; that he was a visionary, a glorious dreamer, a religious rhapsodist. That, at least, was not his

view of himself when he said his words were not his but the Father's who sent him, nor Paul's view when he claimed for Christ all the kingdoms of human action, and told those highest in pride and power of life that their Master also was in heaven. Let us, at least, be honest; if we cannot be that the sooner we close our church doors and vacate our pulpits the better. Let us, at least, free ourselves from the vitiating insincerity of an electicism which applauds Christ when he says things we like to hear, but disapproves and ignores him when he utters words which are trying to the temper or difficult to the understanding. Even though he were but a Jewish carpenter, who preached an impossible social reconstruction, he would at least deserve the respect which sincerity always demands; and how much more when we worship him as the incarnation of Deity—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

This phrase can only be explained, then, by reference to the first clause of the prayer itself, "Our Father who art in heaven." The fatherhood of God was the central conception of Christ's thought, and colored every thing. It regulated his attitude to Jewish society, to the Mosaic law, and to the world at large. Other religions recognized the majesty and justice of God; it was the work of Chris-

tianity to reveal the fatherhood of God. In majesty and justice there is abundant room for condemnation and expiation, but none for tenderness or comfort or forgiveness. From the majesty and justice of God the splendor and order of the world have sprung, this great world of exquisitely balanced law, which fulfills itself without error or interruption, whether in the springing of a grass-blade, the coloring of an insect's wing, the outspread wonder of the starry firmament, or the secret potency of the ocean gulf-streams. But if God is not only law but love, then in human society there must be a place for love as well as law. A world of law alone would be a torture-chamber of incessant and immitigable cruelty to creatures who cannot only fear and obey, but who can weep and pray and love. If the world is the mirror of the majesty of God it is also the mirror of the love of him who is the Father in the heavens. So it follows, then, that the world is not governed by law alone, but love, and you must leave a place for love also in human society. You who ask love from God must at least be prepared to show love to your fellow-man. If we ask to be forgiven our trespasses we ask something for which strict law makes no allowance, and we must not press for strict law—the utter-

most farthing against our brother, while we expect God to forgive us our whole debt. In other words, if God's relation to us is a fatherly relation, our relation to our fellows is both a fatherly and brotherly relation, and what we expect to receive we must be prepared to give.

Now Christ come to explain, defend, and enforce three great rights of man. The first right was the right of life. He taught that man's presence on the earth was not an accident, but the wise arrangement of an infinitely wise Father. That Father had been at infinite pains to care for the least things of his creation. He had woven a raiment for the lily more exquisite than the silk attire of kings, and had clothed the hills with grass, every blade of which surpassed in cunning workmanship the most delicate and skillful work of man. Though a million sparrows fluttered their life out beneath the blue wide skies, yet he knew each as though fed from his hand; and from the loneliest cleft of the loneliest rock of the wilderness he heard the young ravens when they cried for food. To the infinite there is neither great nor small, and if we can conceive of God as holding the stars in their places by the majesty of his power we can equally conceive of him as caring for the spar-

rows by the omniscience of love. The birds had a right to live out of the bounty of the earth, and if the birds, how much more had man? Simplification was the great key-note of all Christ's social teaching. In the perfect society he sketched there would be no anxiety about the means of life, no fear of privation or covetousness of wealth, no Dives feasting from golden dishes while Lazarus mumbled his hard crust at his gates, no mean cares about to-morrow's bread for the toiler, and no still meaner cares of appetite or vanity for the opulent; men would trust the fatherhood of God and be content, they would be conscious of their spiritual relationship to him, and would be delivered equally from anxiety and avarice. There was room enough for all as there was for the lilies, and food enough for all as there was for the sparrows and the ravens. If these had a right to live man had a yet greater, and if man could not live it was the fault of society, and not the fault of God. That was the first great human right which Christ expounded and asserted; in the most literal sense of the words he came that man might have life, and have it more abundantly.

The second great right which Christ asserted and expounded was the right of liberty. It was not liberty through the outrage of law, but

liberty through obedience to the highest law. Man's recognition of the power of law, and his faculty of voluntary obedience to law, was the secret of his greatness. It was this which invested the humblest man with a certain dignity and grandeur—his life was the center of profound and tremendous consequences, his words were reported into the ears of God, and his whispers were trumpeted in thunder from the house-tops of eternity. Such a being could not be a slave unless he consented to his bondage. There was that in him which no tyrant could subdue and no terror overwhelm: let him fear not them who killed the body but were impotent against the soul. The only real slavery was the slavish spirit, the only true liberty was liberty of the soul. That was the true hope of society—the emancipation of the soul of man from its corrupt maxims, and the overthrow of tyranny and wrong would follow. If society was so fashioned that evil seemed every-where triumphant, that was not the work of God nor the order of God, but was the result of the mischievous stupidity of man. For all social, as for all spiritual difficulties, the solution of Christ was absolutely simple—"ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The third great right which Christ taught

was the right of brotherhood. In every word which Christ uttered that sublime truth was either stated or implied. Christ saw men in their essential moral nakedness, and stripped of the mere accidents of place it was obvious enough that mankind was one. Rich and poor, high and low, learned and ignorant, were united by things more precious than gold, and more enduring than learning, by the mystery of birth and the agony of dying, by the impartiality of pain and the catholicity of sorrow, and the meanest shared the thoughts of the highest, and the highest the passions of the meanest. No man can afford to loathe the leper, he knows not how soon he may be a leper; no woman can afford to scorn the Magdalen, she knows not what fate awaits the child within her arms or the maiden whose smile makes sunshine in the house. Does thy brother ask thy cloak of thee? He has a right to ask: give him thy coat also. Does he compel thee to go a mile? Go twain: he is thy brother. Prejudice has its claim on culture, suffering on happiness, poverty on wealth, for men are not isolated personalities, who can do as they like, but members of one body and members one of another. According to the teaching of Christ, the more a man helped his neighbor the better did he love God, for if a

man did not love his brother, whom he had seen, how could he love God, whom he had not seen?

And to these three great primal rights Christ added another—not the right of happiness, which is the great gospel of the political economist, but the right of sacrifice. He taught that the highest glory of man is his power of sacrificing himself for another, and that there is no real nobility but at the price of sacrifice. Love is sacrifice, patriotism is sacrifice, holiness is sacrifice. Let the rich youth who would be perfect sell all his possessions and give to the poor, for character cannot be perfected without sacrifice. Let the man enervated by the sweet cup of prosperous days, and the bright wine of human love, leave father and mother, and houses and lands, and take up his cross and follow Christ. Let a man sacrifice his ambitions, his poor, mean, trivial, personal purposes, and fling himself into the world's life.

> "He only lives in the world's life
> Who hath renounced his own."

There is no salvation for society but by the cross, no throne so high as Calvary, no crown so divine as the crown of thorns. Sacrifice is not a bitter necessity of life, but a splendid

right and privilege, for no other creature but man could conceive the thought of dying for his fellow. Christ came to show us the way, to give his life a ransom for many, to ransom men from selfishness by the spirit of his cross, and teach them that the glory of mere personal triumph is a mean and base, and even wicked, thing beside the glory of personal defeat and downfall for the redemption of men. The satanic and sacrificial were the two poles of the ethics of Jesus, and he taught that men were satanic as they shunned sacrifice, and divine as they endured it.

Now, look at this phrase again in the light of these teachings, and you will see that what it means is this, that human society cannot exist on the mere principles of political economy and bare justice—there must be a margin for love. It is not enough to be coldly just to your neighbor, you must learn to love your neighbor as yourself. God has not treated us on the principle of strict justice alone, and we know it. For why should he forgive us? Why should he promise eternal life to those who do his will during the brief space of earthly activity? On what principle of strict justice can you approve so vast a reward for so unmeritorious a service? Why should Lazarus be carried by the angels into Abraham's bo-

som? How can you justify a compensation so enormous for even such sorrows as Lazarus endured on earth? Why should you hope to get to heaven? It is a consummation out of all proportion to any thing you have ever done or can do. Be life never so hard with you, yet it must be owned that it is but a slight affliction to suffer in view of that eternal weight of glory for which you hope, and on no possible computation of fairness can such a recompense be justified. This is God's way of treating you; the least you can do is to apply something of the same treatment to your brother. Deal with his debt in the same proportion, use the same divine method of arithmetic, compute his claims with the same generosity: you, who hope for heaven and forgiveness, teach your brother what heaven means by your own charity, and what forgiveness is by your own renunciation. For you will not be permitted, when the great accounts of the world are made up, to get every thing and give nothing; with what measure you mete it will be measured to you again.

See how this doctrine of the margin works in home life. The true angel of the home is not Justice, but Charity. You may collect a household, but you cannot build a home on mere justice. The best of us are constantly,

though unconsciously, unjust to each other in home life. So mysteriously are we made that those who live closest each other in the intimacies of daily union often fail to comprehend each other, and the one often hurts and chafes the other. And because these attritions must be there is in the most perfect home a constant need for forgiveness. Conduct the home on the principles of mere justice, and see what comes of it. Do we not know homes where hungry hearts have been crying out for a little love through a life-time, where children grow up stunted in affection because love has been repressed, where the very air of strict justice has been so bitter and nipping an atmosphere that all that is best in life has withered under it, and where the child or mother would gladly barter all the gold of which justice has made them sharers for a single kiss which came from the soul, a mere breath of warmth from the strained lips of the emotions? Such households are simply a cruel travesty of all that home should mean. The home, as an institution, could not exist a single day without the presence of that love which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It ceases to be a home and becomes a barrack when the forgiveness of love is unknown in it. And the same thing is true of

society. The ideal society Christ preached was society as a family, and where that ideal is lost, where our brother man becomes to us a mere cipher in the sum of civilization, when we think it enough to pay him his wages and never think it our duty to give him also sympathy and love, then the world becomes nothing better than one huge barrack, where men merely eat and sleep, and which it would be an advantage for the great majority at once to exchange for the privilege of a grave.

Or see how it applies to business life. It is related of a great employer of labor, recently dead, who bore a character of untarnished probity, that he once had in his employ a man of great promise, who on one occasion acted on his own judgment, and did not carry out his strict instructions. He was instantly dismissed. The man traveled two hundred miles to see his master and make his apology. "And of course you took him on again?" said a friend. The reply was, "Do you take me for a fool?" There may of course be an explanation of the incident which we do not possess, but as the story stands I say that was a wicked and tyrannical act. It was perhaps strict justice, but it was untempered justice, and we can no more bear untempered justice than untempered light. Who are we that we

should deal with one another in this fashion? Do we never make mistakes, that we are so quick and unsparing to avenge them in others? How dare we be hard with one another when we plead daily that God will not be hard with us? It may be that our brother owes us a debt of humiliation and penitence, but not the less we owe him a debt of charity. It may be that he has sinned against us, but we sin yet more grossly against him when we refuse to forgive him his offense. There must be give and take between master and servant, an elasticity in our relations to each other, a margin for love and mercy in our lives, or else our justice will become a vile burlesque of all that is fair and just, and we shall be like the unworthy servant who was forgiven ten thousand talents, and straightway cast his fellow-servant into prison because he owed him an hundred pence. When you are tempted to be inexorable to the man who owes you some paltry hundred pence it will be well for you to recollect the enormous debt which God has forgiven you.

The teaching has a wider bearing than this. The margin for charity and mercy must be recollected in all our dealings where our fellows are concerned. As a matter of political economy it may be a just thing that you should invest your money so as to earn the highest

dividend, but have you a right to take that dividend and ask no questions as to how it is earned? Is it nothing to you that men and women of the same flesh and blood as yourself are toiling twelve and fifteen hours a day to earn that dividend which you receive with such wicked complacency? Does it matter nothing to shareholders in tramways that the life of the tramway conductor is an inhuman drudgery and cruelty of which savages might be ashamed? Does it matter nothing to the shareholders in railways that while the world feasts on its Christmas bounty a pointsman who has worked twenty hours without sleep staggers from his post and falls dead upon the line—dead of drudgery on Christmas day? Has the owner of property no responsibility for the kind of property he owns and for the well-being of his tenants? And can we bear with equanimity the terrible verdict of so calm an observer as Huxley, who has told us that in every element that makes life worth living a pagan life in a savage island is infinitely preferable to the dreadful indecencies of life in a London slum? There can be but one answer to these questions in the minds of all men who think. We are bound to remember that in all these matters we are dealing not with mechanisms but with men, with men who are our

brethren and to whom we owe a debt of brotherly consideration. And so true is this that we may even have to inquire, when men in the literal sense owe us a debt, whether we have not done something to create the very debt they owe us. We may have done it by the system of violent competition in trade which we have set up, by our neglect of the souls and bodies of those who are socially below us, by our indifference to their needs and our callousness to their distress. When the drudge of society cannot pay us our legal claim it may be that we owe him far more than he owes us, for we have made him a drudge, and our wrong against him is greater than his wrong against us. Or, as Emerson has put it, the man who lays

> "hands on another
> To coin his labor and sweat,
> He goes in pawn to his victim,
> For eternal years in debt."

But that is just what men do not think about nor care to be reminded of. No; the man who earns your dividend is not even called a man; he is a "hand," he is an "employee," he is an unknown and nameless cipher in the sum of things, about whom we ask no questions because it does not strike us that he is a sentient and suffering creature, whom we shall have to

meet face to face at the last great audit before the judgment-seat of Christ. And because the natural claims of men are thus ignored our civilization has become more a reproach than a glory to us, and it is a Christian poet who has to say of a Christian country,

> "Alas! for the rarity
> Of Christian charity
> Under the sun."

This doctrine of the necessary margin for charity in human affairs has its application also in the things of the State. All statesmen have to recognize the solidarity of society. The doctrine of selfish individualism, the right of the individual to freedom of contract and sale, unrestrained by any consideration of his relation to others, is a purely devilish doctrine, and, as men begin to see, has wrought immense evil for the nations. We begin to see that the condition of the people is after all a more important question even for the State than the freedom of the individual, and we are acting on it. We act upon it when we limit the hours of labor, when we inspect and restrain the drink-traffic, when we interfere between capitalist and labor, as in the great dock strike, and insist that justice shall be done to the underpaid and patient toilers of society in their reason-

able demands. We may be rebuked in such matters for a sentimental humanitarianism, but that is better than a callous barbarism. Tardily but surely statesmen are beginning to recognize the duty of sympathetic consideration for men as men; in other words, the rights of human brotherhood.

It may be that we may err on this side also, and the natural revulsion from selfish individualism has produced in our day revolutionary socialism. In the keenness of their anguish over human suffering men may say many violent and bitter things, and make many impracticable and even ridiculous proposals; but it is at least honorable in them that they feel, and are not content to let the world slip down to the devil unhelped. They cannot speak more strongly than Christ spoke when he said that the Pharisees "devoured widows' houses," or feel more strongly than he felt when he wept over the city because of the desolations which, like an impending thundercloud, moved swiftly on her. But if we sympathize with the moral earnestness of such men we do not accept their doctrines, and it is necessary to add that the socialism of Jesus does not mean many things which they suppose it to mean. It certainly does not mean social equality, for if all were equal to-morrow

in a year's time we should again have aristocrats and democrats, profligates who had sold their inheritance, and shrewd men who had bought it; men whose force of character had lifted them above their fellows, and men whose vacillation and imbecility had once more degraded them into the helots of society. Nor does it mean that the expenditure of men is to be strictly limited to the barest necessaries of life, that there shall be no elegant furniture, no tapestries or pictures, nothing but the plainest and poorest surroundings for the man who would be the helper of society; for that would mean not merely the abolition of the arts of civilization, but that whole trades and professions would be paralyzed, and that a new and vaster wave of poverty and distress would inundate the world. Nor does it even mean that the minister who preaches the doctrine of Jesus to the Churches should be kept poor because his Master was poor—which is the only application of socialistic Christianity which many people seem capable of suggesting—for the minister is entitled to share the wealth of his people as well as their poverty, even as Jesus shared the luxury of the publican as well as the hospitality of the poor. And still less does it mean that the Church should become a commune, for that experi-

ment tried once left the church at Jerusalem permanently impoverished, and for the people who boasted that there was none among them that lacked Paul had in later years to beg collections throughout the churches of Asia Minor. No! What it means, all that it can mean, is that, whether you be rich or poor, you are the steward of God, and that all your gifts were given for service. You are in a world where a myriad homes are dark, be it yours to brighten them; where hearts are heavy, be it yours to lighten them; where men suffer, be it yours to console them; where men are wronged and injured, be it yours to champion their cause and right them; for without this interchange of charity and sympathy between man and man the world is nothing better for multitudes than one huge broiling hell, across whose thresholds of birth the words may be written, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here."

And I think, lastly, that it cannot be doubted that the world is moving toward some huge social reconstruction. The air vibrates with the armed feet of change. Men are blindly conscious that the present social system is unjust, and are blindly feeling after something better. What have you to say to them? You may ignore them, and then I think I can tell

you what will happen. If men cannot get the socialism of Jesus they will get the socialism of the devil. If men are once convinced that modern Christianity is incapable of taking up the cross of men's social wrongs and evils they will look elsewhere for help, and what Christianity will not give they will try to take in wild agonies of social upheaval of blood and passion and revolt. The socialism of Jesus, so sweet, so sane, so simple, does not make us equal, but it makes us brothers. It does not say, "All that is thine is mine," but "All that is mine is thine." This socialism of Jesus, simple as it is, will give men all they want through the cultivation of human charity, sympathy, and brotherhood; but if we refuse it, then men will go elsewhere for deliverance, and will accept the devil's socialism. And that is a socialism whose outward signs are bloody streets and flaming cities, the wisest heads spitted upon bayonets, the best results of civilization shattered into dust—a socialism of lust and blasphemy, of anarchy and hatred, the first article of whose creed is that there is no God, and that Christianity is an exploded fable. This has happened once in European history; it may happen again, and in the general overthrow not merely the thrones of Europe may disappear, but the Church itself may

be swept away before the flaming tide of universal hatred and contempt.

It is for the Church herself to say whether that catastrophe shall happen, for it is in her power to prevent it. I therefore appeal to those who are beginning life to recollect that Christianity is a thing for common life, something not meant to stimulate Sabbath emotions, but to shape week-day conduct; not a delicate spirit to be housed in the seclusion of the church, but a robust and vigorous presence to rule the heart and the mart, the 'change, the shop, the household; a Gospel for the street as well as for the sanctuary, and that it must determine not only our relation toward God, but our relation toward man in every detail of daily life. Beware that subtle other-worldliness, which gives to the pleasures of hope the strength that should be given to the regeneration of the present. And I appeal to the women of the Church, to the wives and mothers, to those who will be the mothers of the future, to teach the children at your knee the true Christianity which expresses itself in human helpfulness rather than in creeds and dogmas, and in your own lives to cultivate that great power of sympathy which is your essential glory, for the help of all the poor, lost, weary children of our confused humanity.

By woman came the fall, by woman also comes the redemption; the redemption of society, the purification of the home, the healing influences of charity, the penetrating charm of love, which shall lead the world as in silken cords to the accomplishment of its duty to the fallen, the downtrodden, and the weak. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; and it is with that vision of a better day before us that we pray not to be taken to the kingdom, but that the kingdom may come to us: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven."

Is not this the carpenter's son?—*Matt. xiii*, 55.
A friend of publicans and sinners.—*Matt. xi*, 19.

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man;
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These sat he in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment's hem,
For fear of defilement, "Lo! here," said he,
"The images ye have made of me."—*Lowell.*

VIII.

THE DEMOCRATIC CHRIST.

WHEN shall we see the real Jesus? When shall we understand that the Saviour, whose name is music to the world, was a common man, born of common people, living in a common world, and that it was the will of God that his glory should be thus veiled from man, that men might learn that in the commonest life God may be incarnated? It is because we have lost sight of this true humanity of Jesus that his life has faded into so unreal a thing to us.

Nothing is more instructive in this respect than the course of religious art. It will be found that the artist's conception of Christ is always borne out of his conception of life. We have the poetic Christ of Doré, the laboring Christ of Holman Hunt, the tragic Christ of Munkacszy, the awfully realistic Christ of Vereschagin—which is right? All, and yet none. No one has yet painted the element of terror in Christ before which his disciples were amazed and afraid and his antagonists quailed;

or of divine softness when he melted into pure tenderness at the grave of Lazarus; or of majestic renunciation when he turned from the crowd who clamored for a king, and withdrew into the mountain and the desert solitude; neither these things nor the ineffable graciousness that clothed him, the charm that drew the multitude, the spiritual glory which turned wonder into worship and friendship into awe. One man alone, so far as my knowledge goes, has succeeded in giving us the purely human Christ, who nevertheless is felt by us to be essentially divine, and that man is Fra Angelica. It is in the simplest of frescoes, over a door in a forgotten corner of the cloisters of San Marco, at Florence, that the face of this Christ, who was the friend of men, meets us. It is not the man of sorrows; on that radiant face is no trace of tears or the wasting of immedicable grief. It is a face that glows with the bloom of young manhood and the joy of perfect happiness. It is an immortal youth, with delicately tinted cheeks and joyous eyes, with the virility of youth in the supple figure, the hope of youth in the smiling, parted lips. There is no attempt to suggest the divine, unless it be in the more than human grace and joyous radiance of the face itself. It is precisely the human friend who might be met upon the

common roads of life; wise, strong, and gracious, who commands but does not awe us, who attracts but does not overwhelm us; in whom the human heart beats with wholesome vigor, and whose serenity arises from the perfect equipoise and unimpeded completeness of his own nature. It is the man who is divine, not by the miraculous addition of divine attributes, but by carrying the ordinary elements of humanity to a point of development and harmony in itself miraculous. This is the friendly Christ of Fra Angelica; this is the actual presence of him who was the friend of publicans and sinners.

Let us measure these two terms by which Christ is described in these passages. They are both terms of contempt—the one of his condition, the other of his conduct. The Carpenter's Son stood manifestly upon the side of the vast toiling classes, and perhaps his power over the multitude was due in part to the fact that he was not a Pharisee or rabbi, but a child of the people. It is clear that he was recognized as a man of the people. He himself, on every possible occasion, was found upon the side of the people as against their rulers. He was the true friend of democracy; and the net result of his teaching was their social emancipation. He redeemed, in his own

person, labor from the dishonor which a false and wicked state of society had attached to it. He makes the worker of whatever grade the true aristocrat, and idleness and selfishness the unpardonable sins against society. He destroys the mischievous delusion that the highest state of man is to sit with folded hands in splendid sloth or ride with glittering pomp in martial glory; he asserts that the life that is not helpful is hateful. He lifts the humblest toiler from the shame into which society had thrust him and clothes him with dignity and power. He asserts the moral might of meekness and the true glory of humility; his beatitudes are all pronounced on the virtues which no one covets, and his rebuke—surely the strangest woe ever uttered—on that which men most vehemently desire, that they may so far succeed in life that all men shall speak well of them.

The term "friend of publicans and sinners" was even more purely contemptuous than the other, but if it be a reproach it is the most splendid ever uttered by human lips. It means that Christ had inaugurated a divine departure in the world of morals; he inaugurates the new religion of pity. He who has the best right to condemn the sinful woman does not condemn; he who is the purest does not shrink from the

presence of impurity; he who is the greatest preacher of his time does not shut himself up in jealous isolation as did John, but dines with publicans and sinners. He comes eating and drinking; a pure, genial humanity stretching out friendly hands to all the friendless. From his childhood this genial grace had distinguished him. He grew in favor with God and man. God blessed him, and people liked him. He now bestows his friendship where it is most needed. He is on the side of the wronged, the fallen, the guilty, the victims of Pharisaism, hypocrisy, greed, and passion; those wounded by the bitterness of social ostracism, trampled by the malice of social injustice, scorned by a purity that has no pity, and a sanctity that has no sympathy, and a piety that has no inspiration. He is their champion and Redeemer, "the friend of publicans and sinners."

By these two verses, then, we can understand, almost better than by any others, the meaning of Christ in history, and we can measure the revolutionary force of Christianity. It is difficult to use the right words to express what this means, because we are hampered by the evil associations of the words we are forced to use. We cannot speak of communism without suggestions of blood and anarchy, or socialism without remembering the propaganda

of conspiracy and spoliation to which its name has been given, or revolution without a faint shudder at the vision of brutal brows and bloody scaffolds which history suggests. Yet nothing is more clear and distinct than the solemn announcement of Jesus Christ that his coming is the tocsin-bell of world-wide revolution. He came not to bring peace, but a sword; to sow the seeds of variance in homes, communities, and nations; to begin that vast Armageddon which will never end till every tyranny is broken, every wrong avenged, and every evil thing swept into the outer darkness. All history culminates in him, and from his coming a new era commenced, a truth tacitly inwoven in the very chronology of Christendom, which divides the centuries by the birth of Christ, and begins to reckon time afresh with its solemn *Anno Domini.*

Now, Christ came to create a new society, a new world. He had his Utopia, as it has been well said. What was Christ's Utopia? What does Christ authorize us to expect, what not to expect?

In the first place, it is necessary to repeat that Christ does not authorize us to expect happiness. What is happiness? It is a state of mind arising solely from ephemeral and exterior conditions. It is a matter of moods, of

money, of health, of success, of food, of light, of clothing. Even in what seem its securest forms it fades with waning youth or failing fortunes or breaking health, with the wail of shattered love or the requiem over open graves. It is built on circumstance, and changes with the ebb and flow of circumstance. It is more inconstant than the wind, more changeful than the color of the sea or the rapid transformations of an April sky. But this is what men have sought from the world's beginning with an almost frantic quest and passionate thirst. This is what every statesman promises the crowd, and what the crowd perpetually desires. Civilization is the result of the thirst for happiness. It proceeds, as I have said, on the assumption that the better fed and better clothed and better housed a man is the happier is he. It assumes that happiness is the end of life, the one great and all-sufficing aim worth living for. And O, if this be so, what a tragedy is human life! What an irony is civilization! For how many are happy? Who gets what he wants, or, getting it, is satisfied? Where is the man who has found wealth the source of happiness or plenty the secret of peace? And if these who do obey the axioms of the world and succeed in getting the coveted rewards of life are still unhappy, what of those who never

get them? What of the famished poor, whose life is one long drudgery—the lives that know neither fullness of bread nor fullness of love, the hearts and bodies that waste uncomforted and perish unregarded? Yet so certain are men that happiness is the end of life that even the Declaration of American Independence declares in its preamble that one of the "inalienable human rights" is the "pursuit of happiness." O, that is where all our social schemes fail; we seek to make men happy instead of seeking to make them good. Christ has once and for all exploded the fallacy that exterior conditions can necessarily develop the soul's growth and peace in the two terrific parables of Dives and Lazarus and the rich fool. And he has also summed up the whole matter in one tremendous sentence, which seems to burn its way like a shaft of lightning right into the most secret places of our thought, when he asks, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

It is significant that once only does Christ use the word, and then he says that men are "happy" if they know his commandments and do them. Thrice only do his apostles use the word, and then it is to assure us that we should be "happy" when we suffer for Christ, when we bear reproach for him, when we en-

dure in his name. Another word was ever on his lips—blessedness. He taught that the mind was its own place, the heaven or hell of men; that the kingdom of God is within us or nowhere. He gave us a spell by which we become indifferent to circumstance. He has taught men to use it ever since, and to declare, as a man of our generation whose life was outwardly a failure, declares: "When Job said, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' no wealth could enrich him after that. He had reached his climax." Christ said that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. "To be ministered unto;" that is the final exposition of happiness: to feed delicately and sleep softly, and be sheltered from rough winds and ill sights; to lay man and nature under contribution for our personal delight, to set a thousand weary feet running our errands, and have a thousand weary backs bowed to win us wealth; to build our palace of ease in its garden of roses, careless of the wasted hands that beat against its golden gates, or the pollution that is splashed against its walls—that is the price at which happiness is bought. Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, to put his hand upon the aching sore and close it, to be servant of all, to stoop as low as man can sink, to shun

no risk, no pollution, no hardship, no agony, if by any means he could save some. He was the friend of publicans and sinners, and was blessed in their friendship.

Christ's Utopia, again, does not promise us a remedy for human ills by the abolition of either labor or poverty; that were as vain a dream as the pursuit of happiness. As regards labor, no true man would desire its abolition. The social paradise of such writers as Edward Bellamy is a little better than a strictly regulated hell. It turns the world into one vast prison-house. It is a state in which only the brainless could be content. Labor and purpose are the music of life, the salt of health, the springs of purity. If any thing be taught us by the Carpenter's Son it is the dignity and perennial nobleness of honest labor. The lowliest toil is a diviner thing than the most luxurious idleness; nor is poverty without its compensations. Lazarus hears angels' music as he sleeps upon his pallet of rags, and is borne by angels into Abraham's bosom. To be poor is no sin: none was ever poorer than the Christ, and poverty may be made to yield infinite blessings. Christ recognizes that society must divide itself into grades, and he will render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. It is only the blind and ignorant

who can invent no better way of remedying social inequalities than by the spoliation of the rich and the enrichment of the spoiler. There is Lazarus at the gate, but you will not redress his wrongs by burning the palace of contemptuous Dives. You will redress them if you can make Dives the friend of publicans and sinners—if you can make him feel the divine force of brotherhood, that the man at the gate has a claim upon him, and that God made them both, and is no respecter of persons. There is not, and cannot be, equality, for Lazarus is a leper and Dives is not; Lazarus is dying, and Dives has yet many days to live; Lazarus has a soul within him, but Dives has drowned his in sloth and gluttony, and is really poorer than Lazarus. There is not equality, and cannot be; for golden chalices and heaped-up silver, silken raiment and beds of down, cannot cure the pain of those dreadful sores. No; the only true equality comes not by change of state, but by change of heart. When the divine doctrine of human brotherhood is learned, when the divine friendliness of Jesus is practiced, then the middle wall of partition between rich and poor will be broken down, and Dives will save his soul by dividing his wealth, and Lazarus will be healed of a sorer pain than any bodily, even the isolation

of a poverty for which no man cares, and a suffering which only angels pity. Equality comes of itself, and in its only possible form, by the recognition of human brotherhood, when we recollect that "All we are brethren, and one is our Master, even Christ."

At this point, even at the risk of misconception, it is necessary to affirm what has been called the inwardness of Jesus. It cannot be claimed that Christ ever troubled himself much about the outside of things. It was not because he was indifferent to them, but because he saw that they could only be changed from the inside. It is a mistake to claim Christ as a social reformer in the usual sense of the words. He was as little a social as a political reformer. He offered no panacea to a diseased society; he offers none still. To selfishness he uttered one pregnant word, "Ye must be born again;" to poverty, "The kingdom of God is within you." The whole force of his teaching was to make men sublimely indifferent to the purely external conditions of their life. He aimed at a higher point; he taught the drudge he had a soul, the child of want that he was a child of God, the publican and harlot that they might be changed and ennobled from within. His Spirit infected his disciples with a noble contempt for what we

call the good things of life. It worked out in them a new nature which held the world lightly, as it was afterward to work out among the lowliest classes of society, in many a great city, a spirit of sublime content; as it worked among the Puritans a vivid sense of the reality of eternal things alone, and has begotten in modern missionaries an heroic renunciation of the world. The one saving clause in such a statement is, that while he communicated the secret of a profound equanimity to his followers in regard to their own secular environments, his Spirit was destined to create in them an equally profound sympathy with the sorrows of others.

If, then, Christ does not authorize us to expect either happiness or equality, if it be admitted that he busied himself little with the outside condition of things, what, then, does he authorize us to expect? What are the elements of his Utopia?

Simple and inefficient as the answer may seem, yet the great element is that divine friendliness which made him the helper of the publican and sinner. For that divine friendliness meant, in its essence, the rights of humanity as humanity. To judge the revolutionary force of Christ aright we have not only to recount his words, but to estimate the spirit and

intention of his life, with the constant reincarnation of that spirit in the lives of others. We cannot, for example, find a single word which he said about chivalry or slavery or many kindred topics. Perhaps not; but what did it mean that in a time of the deepest social darkness, when patriotism was quenched and military glory supreme, when one half the world was mortgaged to the other half, when the most rigid caste separated class from class throughout the world, that a working-man should come from Nazareth, and by the force of his teaching draw into an actual brotherhood all sorts and conditions of men? It meant the abolition of caste, it was the portent of a great liberty. Behind him came the dawn, the morning of a new social era, and with the invisible weapons of his words he shattered the whole fabric of a corrupt and tyrannical society. We could almost imagine that, throughout the dungeons of the world, every chain shook and slackened when he came out of Nazareth, preaching liberty to the captive, and every slave felt the thrill of a new hope when he preached deliverance to them that were bound. He abolished slavery from the inside; its germ was killed when the democratic doctrine of Christianity overspread the Roman Empire. True, it took centuries to

die; it retreated from land to land. But ever as the leaven of Christ's spirit worked the bitter wrong of slavery was felt; and if to-day slavery has ceased to exist it is the democratic influence of Christianity which has abolished it.

Or what did it mean, again, that, in a day when Roman law gave the parent a complete right over his child, so that the child had practically no rights, Christ should put a little child into the midst of his disciples and make the child the type of his teaching, the symbol of his kingdom? It was the assertion of the dignity of the little child, of the claim of frailty, of the honor that men should pay to innocence; and it meant a new era for children. Or what did it mean that holy women accompanied Christ upon his ministry, that fallen women found in him a friend, that they were at the cross to wrap the body in fragrant spices, and early at the sepulcher to weep upon the Easter dawn; that it was a woman to whom Christ first appeared, that women were in the earliest councils of the Church, that they were among its most unselfish servants, and the first to claim the prize of martyrdom? It meant a new era for woman—her true emancipation, and the birth of all that we call chivalry. It freed her sympathy, it invested her with sacredness, it has made her for many centuries now

the light of the home, the minister of purity, the consoler of suffering, the helpmeet of man, the purifier of society, the benign custodian of virtue. Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale are the direct fruit of the cross of Christ; without Christ such lives were impossible. The era of humanity began with the Working-man of Nazareth.

That which the friendliness of Jesus Christ really meant, then, was the sense of the individual worth of men and women. For him there was nothing common or unclean in humanity. However low it had sunk, it could be raised, and to save it was worth dying for. It was that individual worth of men and women which was forgotten in Christ's day, and is in ours also; it was that which he remembered when he suffered the woman who was a sinner to touch him, and told the story of the good Samaritan. I do not say that it was wholly forgotten then, still less that it is wholly forgotten now. If the world is as sweet as it is, if it is not yet a hell, it is because that truth has been pressed home on men. And it is Christ who has made the world conscious of this truth and has given us all the salt which saves civilization from corruption. To see a man or woman as a *soul*, as a living spirit made by God, as something immeasurably higher

than all created things, is to see a very great and very awful thing. It is like looking on God himself; it thrills and solemnizes us. It was thus Christ looked on men and women, even though publicans and sinners; it is thus he taught his disciples to regard them—so that it is more than a noble touch of poetry—it is a profound truth, which that true poet, Mr. Myers, states, when he makes St. Paul say:

> "Only like *souls* I see the folk thereunder,
> Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings;
> Hearing their one hope, with an empty wonder,
> Sadly contented in a show of things."

To see that vision is to master at a glance the science of altruism; it is to make us ready to be offered up if we can redeem others. That was how the heart of Christ beat toward the publican and the sinner; and the perfect explanation of what Christianity means is in the Christ of whom Paschal says with noble truth, that whereas Mohammed founded his kingdom by killing, Christ did so by suffering himself to be killed. Do we share these feelings? Are our hearts the Bethlehems of the new incarnation of the Son of God, so that the Christ who is born again in our hearts lives again in us, and through our kindly hands, our anointed lips, our serviceable lives, his life streams out

again upon the world in love and healing? That is the scheme for our own salvation and that of society with which he presents us. We must suffer with him if we would reign with him; our selfishness, our egoism, our exclusiveness, our callousness to suffering which is not personal, our hardness to sinners, all this must die, and be crucified with him, before the day of the world's redemption draweth nigh.

How, then, do these principles apply themselves to us and to our own times? They unmistakably suggest the question of what churches are for, and what is the Church? Christ was the friend of publicans and sinners; the Church, if it represent Christ, then, is the friend of the friendless, the asylum of the hopeless, the haven of the unhappy. Every separate community which calls itself a church is a segment of the kingdom of Jesus, a sample by which we measure the whole, an object-lesson of what he means to make of the whole earth when his work is finished. The Church is the manufactory of character. Wherever we see the church-spire soaring above the homes of men we have a right to say, "That is a type of the skyward aim of Christianity; beneath that roof character is being made; the people who assemble there are the present-day incarnations of the mind

of Christ." It is no less a burden than this that Christ lays upon his Church. He describes himself as the vine and his disciples as the branches through whom the vital sap flows; his disciples describe the Church as the body, of which he is the head. He bids us be perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect. It is true we cannot be perfect in the same way or degree; but in perfection there is neither high nor low, great nor small. The grass-blade is as perfect a thing as the royal oak beneath which it grows; the lily of the field is as exquisite a creation as the noble flower that blossoms once in a decade; the drop of water is as perfect in its own completion as the star which it reflects. Within our natural limitations we are to be Christs to this sinful world. The Church is to be the multiform incarnation of Him who was the friend of publicans and sinners.

It follows, then, that if the Church is the incarnation of Christ it will be animated by his infinite friendliness; the Church will exist for the people, not the people for the Church. Suppose, if you can, some entirely uninformed person arriving in this country and asking in all simplicity what are these buildings we call churches? "The prison," says he, "I can understand, that is for criminals; the hospital,

that is for the sick; the school, that is for the young; but what is the church for? It represents a great deal of money; it seems a pleasant place for any one who cares for music or oratory—when you can get them; it appears to afford a very comfortable way of spending an hour or two, and its occupants look by no means unhappy, ill-paid, or out-of-elbows. But all that can be said of a theater, a lecture-hall, a concert-room. What, then, differentiates a church from these?" In many cases it would be impossible to return any very intelligible answer. Look at the modern church and compare it with the democratic Christ. Is it democratic? Does it seek to be the friend of the friendless? Is it not true that in all great cities the tendency is to leave the crowded neighborhoods of the poor and to follow the comfortable and wealthy classes "up town," and there to erect comfortable conventicles for their convenience, while the publican and sinner are forgotten? Do the rich and poor really meet together in God's house? Is it not our modern method to have one church for the rich and another for the poor? "Little Bethel" is our to^ocommon embodiment of the Christian Church. In Little Bethel the democratic Christ has no place. The religion of Little Bethel is by far the most numerous of relig-

ions, and it has never taken any account of that vast entity "the common people." It is a religion of narrow, priggish, ignorant, other-worldliness—except on week-days. It consists of knots of men who think that churches exist for them, for the display of their talents, their ambition, their social prejudices, their greed of power. Little Bethel knows nothing about publicans and sinners, and does not want to know. It sits upon its money-bags, and, as long as pews are let and finances prosper, does not care who comes or goes. It stubbornly refuses to adapt itself to the problems it ought to solve. It does not ask what the people need, but what the people ought to like, and acts accordingly. It acts accordingly, and with the result that in most great cities the central churches wear an air of squalid bankruptcy. They are forlorn and deserted, and, with a larger population round them than ever they had, have no one within their walls. The infinite friendliness of the democratic Christ it has never so much as dreamed of.

It is strange, it is lamentable, how all religion seems to have an inherent trend toward Pharisaism. It almost seems as if with the building of churches, the establishment of regular and reputable services, the tide of prosperity which comes with public confidence,

the very spirit of religion is apt to exhale and vanish. The note which Christ struck, and which it is for us continually to reproduce, is not Pharisaism, but friendliness. If Christ was specially the friend of publicans and sinners, the first friendship of the Church must be for these. It is these who ought to be found within every church. The Church should be the friend of labor, the friend of the disreptuable, the friend of all lonely, soiled, insignificant, unfriended, and unconsidered people. It should be the haven of the doubtful, the discouraged, the tempted, the miserable, the outcast, and if these are not attracted to it that church is a failure. It may have money, but it has not Christ. It may have highly reputable officers, but it has not the Holy Ghost. It may be a most elegant Little Bethel, with a most select assortment of most reputable souls in it, but it is assuredly not the incarnation of the democratic Christ. It is the temple of modern Pharisaism, not the friendly asylum of hope, comfort, and redemption which he designed. "What man shall there be among you," says Christ, "that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep?" The

implication is that we care more for sheep than men, more for respectability than the salvation of men. Our chief beatitude is, "Be respectable, and you will die respected." A sheep has a value and is worth care; but there are so many of us, and human flesh is so cheap, and the publican so unpleasant a person, that for men and for the one man we care nothing. And men lie in deep pits all around us—in pits of ignorance and defilement and loveless-ness, of dullness, of hopeless drudgery; and if we do not lift them out, even at the expense of respectability, we do not fulfill the spirit of Christ. These are the people who most want a friend. Christ says, "I will be friends with you." He comes with joyous alacrity and pulls them out of the pit, and seeks to brighten their dull souls with hope, and any agency which lifts men out of pits, which brings them into moral, intellectual, or spiritual daylight, is doing the work of Christ, and is really a segment of his Church.

But it is with much more than the interior spirit of churches that we are concerned. The Church is set in the world as a governing and leading force through which the whole earth is to be redeemed. If it be the incarnation of the democratic Christ it will powerfully affect the civil, commercial, and political life of na-

tions. It will set a higher type and make that type respected. Is the type of business morality so very much better within the Church than without it? Is the average Christian man so much better a citizen than the unbeliever? We can, of course, think of many individual instances, but the question must be answered in a different way. We must remember that the Church has had centuries in which to produce this impression on the world, and then we must ask, What are the conditions of life in countries called Christian, and how far do they incorporate the spirit of Jesus? I can only reply that the social conditions of life to-day in countries called Christian are in themselves the most crushing reproach which can fall upon the Church of Him who was the child of labor and the friend of publicans and sinners. What, for example, is the avowed principle of business life? It is ungoverned competition, with a view to the accumulation of rapid wealth; and what would Christ have said to such a principle? Broadly speaking, it means buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, which, within certain honorable limitations, may be a useful axiom of trade, no doubt. But it means much more than this in practice. It means underselling your neighbor and choking him off the market

to enrich yourself; it means the unscrupulous creation of rings and corners which bring want and famine to thousands of homes that an individual may be enriched; it means grinding the poor and pushing the workwomen into vice; it means a supreme carelessness of how others live, if only you can snatch an added morsel for yourself out of the vile scramble for food. It means that every trade is overstocked, that the principle of every man speaking truth with his neighbor is practically suspended in business, that tradesmen stoop to lure the public to their shops by shameful tricks, and that the public are demoralized by a wicked cheapness, and never conceive it to be a moral duty to give a fair price for a good article. And it means, also, that you do not get a good article even when you pay a fair price; that workmen have no honest pride in their work, and masters find that the workman's supreme aim is to do as little as he can for the largest wages he can demand; that weary eyes have pored themselves blind over the clothes we buy, that your babes are clothed in garments which have been washed with the tears of shame, and that the reek of death and the smell of the fire of human anguish cleaves to the goods we buy so cheap, and will not buy otherwise than cheap.

It is a foul and inhuman state of things, a new slavery not less shocking than the old, for, save that our white slaves have the liberty to cut their throats or drown themselves without inflicting loss on their masters, it is hard to see how they are better off than the Negro knocked down to the highest bidder or whipped to death in the cotton fields. If the Friend of publicans and sinners spoke to-day would he not point to many a man of business who sits to-day in church and is honored in the Church, and say, "Ye are they who for a pretense make long prayers—and devour widows' houses. Ye hypocrites; how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Or look, again, at modern life in relation to the actually outcast. We know the sense in which Christ used the word "sinner" of a woman. We know that the woman who is a sinner is still with us, and probably one midnight spent in the streets of London could show us more of this uttermost degradation of humanity than Jesus saw in his whole ministry in Jerusalem. We cannot go home to our happy children but that worn, hollow face will show itself like a dead face, tossed up into sight a moment on the insolent waves of our city life. We shall see it; shall we think of all it means? Shall we picture it

as it once was, dimpled with innocent laughter, angelic in innocent sleep? Shall we read the tragedy written in those sharpened features, the anguish shuddering through the false gayety out of those tired eyes? Such a woman came to Jesus Christ. Those lips, soiled with corruption, kissed him. Those eyes that had seen so many evil sights shed penitent tears upon his feet. Do we ever permit such to come near us? Does the Church make any real, organized, and strenuous effort to save them? Do we not take their presence as a matter of course? We do not mean to be hard, but we are careless; we are touched when we do think of it, but we seldom think. "So between hard-hearted people, thoughtless people, busy people, humble people, and cheerfully-minded people, the giddiness of youth and the preoccupation of age, the philosophies of faith and the cruelties of folly, priest, Levite, masquer, and merchantman, all agreeing to keep their own side of the way, the evil that God sends to warn us gets to be forgotten, and the evil that he sends us to be mended by us gets left unmended." And again we may ask what would the Friend of sinners say to this if he spoke again and in our midst? Are not our hymn-singings and pious festivities a solemn insult to him, while no man careth for

the soul of these? Every Church ought to maintain a home for the sick, the poor, or the fallen, and where one Church is unable to do this a combination of Churches can accomplish it. We have to *seek* that which is lost, for the lost have to be sought, and that which is not sought will not be found; and if we do not this those whom we have not strived to save will rise before us in the judgment, pale with agony, scarred with shame, yet aflame with anger, the solemn passionless anger of a supreme reproach which will crush us and confound us utterly when their stained lips cry against us, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to us, ye did it not to him!"

We may say that we are not wholly to blame, nor are we. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, in church matters as in all others. If the Church had from the first consistently remembered who it was it worshiped, what his life was, what his spirit and temper were, how different a world would it be to-day! If the Church had known that the very seed of its life was in democratic and social sympathy, how nearly might the kingdom of God already have come on earth! But let us have done with reproaches and attend the cry of the earnest and sincere, who ask, "What

can I do?" O, brother, so many things, if you will but try. You can at least give a fair price, and refuse to sell your sense of right for gain. You can see to it, if you be a master, that you give your workman just and honest wages; and, if you be a workman, that you give your master full and ungrudging service. You can forswear that most common and damnable form of "other worldliness" which consoles itself with thoughts of making your own calling and election sure and blinds itself to the wickedness and misery of the world that is. You can be the friend of publicans and sinners, gentle to the erring, tender to the weak, merciful to the wronger and the wronged. "I met a beggar," says a Russian poet, "and he stretched out to me his coarse, ugly hand, blue with cold, and asked an alms. I felt in my pocket and was ashamed to find I had nothing. I said, 'Brother, I have nothing,' and I gave him my hand. 'Thank you, brother,' he replied, 'that too is an alms.'" That beggar felt that brotherhood was more than alms, and so it is. To the individual it is always possible to be the friend of publicans and sinners.

And through this spirit in individuals the State will become changed, and in no other way. The inwardness of Christ's method is

vindicated by its unfailing success. To whom can we appeal save the individual? And therefore it is to you I say that all social, all municipal, all political questions are religious questions, and must be treated as such if the kingdom of God means any thing. In the end the religious question is the only question. If we do not solve these questions in the spirit of Christ they will solve themselves without us, but in another way. Look at your streets and see if that other solution of the problem is not already indicated there. In the oldest countries of Europe are not the great cities full of hollow eyes and famine-stricken faces, the scape-goats of our greed, the lepers made by our neglect? And are even the newest cities of the New World without this same dreadful menace? And does not the tide gain on us? Do not these miserable forms swarm up fast and faster, and as they shuffle out of the light into their holes and warrens, turn upon us angry, wolfish eyes, as though to say, "Yet a little while and our turn will come; we only wait the leader and the word, and of all these splendid piles and streets of palaces not one stone shall be left upon another!" Is that treason? No; it is prophecy. It was even so Christ spoke when he warned Jerusalem that she was neglecting the things that

were for her peace and would be left desolate forever. We may well have ceased to believe in the second advent of Christ with any ardent hope, for who would not fear if he were to come? Who could dare to say, "Behold, Lord, here is thy kingdom: take thine own." If he were here would he not again enter the temples, and overturn the money-tables, and seize the silver chalices, and tell us that our best way of remembering his passion would be to sell all that we had and give to the poor? Nay, if he came, what Church is there fit to receive him? And is there not but too much truth in the savage saying of Carlyle, that if Jesus returned a benevolent peer or two might invite him to dinner, but that in a year or so we should try him at the Old Bailey and execute him without fail? No, we are not ready for Christ; the best of us must needs say, "Spare us yet another year," not "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

But, evil as we are and weak, we will not give up this hope of a perfected earth. We will remember that great saying of Luther's: "We tell our Lord plainly that if he will have his Church he must look after it himself. We cannot sustain it, and if we could we should become the proudest asses under heaven." We do not go this war at our own charges.

We have the living Christ with us. All that we have to do is not to resist his incarnation in and through us. If we believe in him we cannot be pessimists. Pessimism is a disease of shallow minds, which attacks mainly the less forceful and efficient natures among us; the wider and deeper natures have too much vitality to succumb. Despair is a disease—the sane and sound nature must needs be hopeful. A little thought, like a little knowledge, is a dangerous thing; a little more thought will often take us out of the storm-belt into the far-reaching sunlight. The very fact that these problems do move men intensely, that it is possible to preach about them, that we are willing to hear honest condemnation of ourselves, honest exposure of the errors of ecclesiasticism and civilization alike, is in itself a proof that at heart we are still sound. There never was a time when the person of Christ attracted so much attention as now. There never was a time when the Christian conscience was so sensitive to the social problem as now. May I not also add, when I remember all our great philanthropies, our hospitals, refuges, and homes, our great social missions, our university settlements in great cities, our hosts of heroic workers of whose work one hears nothing until the earth closes over them,

there never was a time when the spirit of Jesus was so powerfully molding the world as now? If there is any principle of fairness between rich and poor, if any right of labor has been conceded, it is the work of Him who was called the carpenter's son; if brotherhood has become any thing more than a word and an aspiration it is the Church of the democratic Christ alone that has given even the most transient and imperfect expression of the fact. And if we reproach ourselves and are keen to see where Churches are unlike Christ, and so-called Christian civilization a burlesque on his scheme of life, it is because we have been increasingly enlightened as to what Christ demands of us and increasingly anxious to do his will. These are the only two real duties for us to perform: the first is, not to resist the incarnation of Christ in us by any insincerity or selfishness, for if Christ lives in us his kingdom must be set up through us. The second is to trust him, to keep the light of a great hope burning, to believe that his will is being done, that he is still working in the world, that he must conquer, that every doubt is really bringing us nearer in the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. When I have done all I can then I take refuge in Luther's daring saying. I believe that Christ knows

how to do his own work and is with us always, even to the end of the world. More than once in those long nights I spent on the Atlantic I went on deck when all was still and felt how insignificant a thing was man in all that lonely immensity of sea and sky. There was no sound save the cry of the wind among the spars, the throb of the great engines, the sound of the many waters rushing round the vessel's keel. I felt the mystery of life; I was conscious of "the whisper and moan and wonder and diapason of the sea." And then out of the stillness there came a voice, clear and ringing—the voice of the man on the look-out—crying to the night, "All's well, and the lights burn bright! All's well, and the lights burn bright!" How did I know all was well? What knew I of the forces that were bridled in the mysterious throbbing heart of those unceasing engines, of the peril that glared on me in the breaking wave or lay hidden in the dark cloud that lay along the horizon? I knew nothing; but the voice went sounding on over the sea, "All's well, and the lights burn bright!" And the wind carried it away across the waters, and it palpitated round the world, and it went up soaring and trembling, in ever fainter reverberations, among the stars. So I stand for a little while amid great forces of

which I know little; but I am not alone in the empty night. The world moves on to some appointed goal, though by what paths I know not; it has its Steersman, and it will arrive. And, amid the loneliness and mystery, the peril and uncertainty, I have learned to hear a Voice that cries, "All's well!" and tells me why all is well; it is the voice of Christ saying, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.—*Matt. xxiv*, 27, 28.

Times which have ceased to believe in God and in immortality may continue illogically to utter the holy words "progress" and "duty;" but they have deprived the first of its basis, and the second of its sanction.—*Mazzini.*

I shall always respect war hereafter. The waste of life, the dreary havoc of comfort and time, are overpaid by the vistas it opens of eternal life, eternal law, reconstructing and upholding society.—*Emerson.*

IX.

NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WHEN we speak of progress we must ask, Whither? When we speak of duty we ask, To whom or what? Progress must have a goal. Duty must have a source. There is a progress which is progress backward; or, if we dismiss the antithesis, is progress in a circle, traveling along a road which seems to go forward, but in reality is the beaten track along which the innumerable empires of the past have marched to ruin. There is only one real progress—Godward; there is only one direction in which we can soar—upward; there is only one duty laid on any man—the duty of righteousness. When these principles are lost individuals and nations alike perish. They present the spectacle of a moral corruption, waited on by an inevitable retribution.

In this saying of Christ's we have two illustrations of these truths, each striking and even terrific. Christ is picturing the dissolution of society, the break-up of old forms of life and government, the retributions of iniquity. There

will come a time, he says, of infinite disquiet, suspense, fear; of wild questionings and mocking answers, the firmament of life full of confusion before a storm, as the sky is piled up with huge impending clouds before a tempest breaks. In other words, there is a day of judgment at hand, and its symbols are the lightning and the vulture: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles or vultures be gathered together."

One of these illustrations is familiar, one unfamiliar. Let us look at them.

We all have occasion from time to time to know what the lightning is that cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west. After many days of heat and sunshine there comes a brooding pause in nature. Suddenly the singing of birds is hushed in the woods, and in the intense silence the troubled whispering of the leaves falls upon the ear with an ominous distinctness. Slowly the wings of the storm unfold, and above us huge mountains of cloud sail along, darkening all the world as they go. The air grows thick and dense, and the earth seems to cower in suspense as before the blow of some invisible assailant. Then at last the silence is broken by the tremendous artillery of heaven. The storm breaks "like a whole sea o'erhead;" height replies to height,

and the foundations of the world seem shaken. Upon those vast cloud-towers an awful light burns, and then edges flame with a blinding fire. For a little while the whole world seems given over to warfare, turbulence, confusion; then, suddenly as it began, the rain ceases, the lightning dies away in fitful splendors, and the sudden singing of a blackbird in the hedge-row tells us that the hour of terror is over, the storm has passed. That is a scene we have all witnessed; and what is its meaning? The veriest child can answer us that lightning is one of the great sanitary officers of nature. When the air grows thick and turbid, and long heat and drought infect the atmosphere with corruption, God sends his thunder out to sweep the world clean and his lightning to destroy that which is a menace in the health of men. The lightning purges the atmosphere and restores to it those qualities of purity and vitality which it had lost. Where the carcass is, where pollution and corruption lurk, there comes the lightning, the swift judgment of God, a terrible but wholesome force, the beneficence of the Almighty manifested in flames of judgment.

Look at the other illustration, familiar enough to an Oriental, strange only to us. In the long march over the desert some man or some animal falls, and the dead body lies fes-

tering in the sun. The sky is absolutely cloudless; for weary mile on mile there stretches a profound solitude. But scarcely have ten minutes passed over that dead body when a small black speck is seen on the infinite blue of the horizon. From afar the vulture, hunting his prey through the pathless fields of heaven, has scented corruption, and with an unerring instinct has discovered it. Unseen himself, at some immeasurable height in the firmament he has seen all that has happened, and drops like an arrow on his prey. He is the sentinel of an army, and in a few moments the heaven is darkened with the rush of wings, and his brethren join him in the dreadful feast. How it is done we know not; it is one of the standing miracles of nature. But we know that it always happens with the precision of a great law, and if you pass that way upon the morrow nothing is left but a few white bones bleaching in the fierce sun of the desert. The vultures or the eagles have done their work, and no trace of corruption is left. So, says Jesus Christ, it is in the moral world. At a certain stage of decay destruction becomes inevitable. There is a law which works perfectly—one had almost said automatically—against every species of impurity; and swift as the unthinkable rapidity of the lightning,

unerring as the flight and instinct of the vulture, the messengers of vengeance fix upon moral decay. It is the first duty of God to keep his world clean, and the blame and vengeance which sweep away corruption are in reality beneficent forces, and the evidence of God's fatherly thoughtfulness for his creatures. We, who fear the lightning and do not care to think of the dreadful work of the vulture, are apt to regard them as hateful accidents in what we are pleased to call "the beneficent order" of nature. But they are not so; they are proofs of the beneficence; they are visible expressions of God's good government, the law of which is that where the air is thick the thunder-storm bursts, where the carcass is there the eagles are gathered together.

Now this passage affords us an insight into the great laws of God's government and judgment. Let us see what these laws are, and what are our errors in relation to them.

First of all, the commonest form of human error is to think of such judgments as though they were controlled by no law at all, or, what is worse, to invent mean theories of law to suit our imperfect understanding of the facts. Between calamity and judgment there is a wide difference, but one which we are often quite incapable of discerning. Thus the Jews

took the fact of blindness as an evidence of sin, and reckoned the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell as sinners above all men. It is so that so many still interpret the solemn calamities of life, as the editor of a certain irreligious "religious journal" did, when he explained that the Tay Bridge disaster was God's visible condemnation on the sin of Sunday traveling. When we read such blasphemies we cannot but rejoice that the thunder-bolts and fiery arrows of judgment are not intrusted to the cruel hands of men—and religious fanatics are ever the cruelest of men—but to the wise hands of Him who alone sees where immedicable corruption is, and destroys nothing that is worth saving.

But our errors about God's judgments are not only in our misreading of their method, but also of their essential nature. What, for example, is more common than to think of God's government as arbitrary and capricious? For how many centuries has not the world cowered under the fearful gloom of a theology which asserts that God elects whom he will and rejects whom he pleases with mere tyrannical caprice?

> "Who as it pleases best thysel',
> Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
> A' for thy glory,
> And not for any guid or ill
> They've done afore thee."

When men get to think of God in that way two things always happen: first, they never think of God as loving, but as tyrannical; and, secondly, human self-complacency is sure to lead many of the most worthless of men to judge themselves as the elected, and to apply God's judgments with the narrowest fanaticism to their personal antagonists and enemies. That is one of the sure effects of the doctrine of predestination as it has been preached. Men have made God the patron of their evil passions, their prejudicess, their envy, and their vanity; and in reading the sorrowful mystery of earth they have arrogated to themselves something of the omniscience of the Almighty. And the result has been that they have had no accurate conception of what God's judgment means, but have habitually thought of it as arbitrary and capricious, and have sought to conciliate him with vain sacrifice and formal duty. We have feared him for his power, and not served him for love of his law; we have obeyed him as slaves, and not done his will as children. And then when his judgments have broken on the world we have not been able to understand them, and still less to interpret them to others. We have spoken of them as the dark ways of God and the secrets of the Almighty, not with any real

understanding of those profound phrases, but as though there could be the darkness of unrighteousness in him who is the light and life of the universe. To those who have assailed us and our theology with not unnatural incredulity we have had no reply save the stolid *non possumus* of an unreasoning fanaticism. When they have cried in their despair that it is impossible to believe in a God of caprice we have not seen that the God of the Bible is never capricious, because we have consistently ignored those revelations of God which declare him to have no variableness, neither shadow of turning, but always to be found acting within the sphere of invariable and righteous law. The worst result of our narrow interpretation of God's judgments is not so much that we have injured ourselves, but that we have injured others; for the infidelity of the world is the direct outcome of the theology of the Churches.

For, next to the great question, Is there a God at all? the supreme question for every human creature is, What sort of God is he, and does he reign? To that question the reply of the noblest souls has always been, "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad!" That is to say, the nature of God is such that it should be a gladness to the earth to know that he reigns.

He is the center of all authority, and he is righteous: "The soul of the universe is just." Who could live in a world that was governed by no fixed laws? What sort of a world would that be where caprice ruled every thing, where the seasons came as they liked, and the day dawned as it chose, and the tides followed no intelligible law? Yet that is the sort of moral world which many people imagine they inhabit. They think of God as plastic to the most foolish of human appeals, as a sort of throned paternal amiability, and they act—to quote one of our most brilliant commentators—"as though a fool were on the throne of the universe." We could not be glad that such a God as that reigned. It would be no joy to the earth to be governed by such a being. Nor does such a God reign, and the first thing we have to record about God is that he works within the realm of unalterable and righteous laws. We may sing, if we will, for it is true—

> "There's a wideness in God's mercy
> Like the wideness of the sea,"

but we must also add—

> "There's a kindness in his justice
> Which is more than liberty."

And this is the meaning of Christ, that God is neither arbitrary nor capricious in his love or

in his judgments; both move within an intelligible sphere, both have a clearly discerned orbit, and the law of the judgment is, that "Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Here, then, is the first truth which illumines this saying of Christ's: that judgment is the sure result of corruption, corruption the sure precursor of judgment, and there is no arbitrary or capricious element in the calculation. The vultures do nor gather where there is no carcass; the lightning does not scatter its winged fire where there are no elements of foulness to be burned up. The more we know of nature the more wonderful and complete does her orderliness appear. Why, there is not a leaf amid the million leaves of the forest that dances in the sunny breeze, not a bird that pours out its solitary music, not a grass-blade that clothes the hills and raises its tiny column of green life out of the warm earth that is not fulfilling all the time some law in the perfect order of nature. It is in vain that we seek in nature for the arbitrary or capricious element; the humblest life has some mission, some particular function to fulfill, some special work to do. Even where we find seemingly useless beauty a closer inspection always proves that the very beauty itself is

the servant of some concealed use and the output of some hidden law. In our blindness we often mistake these meanings of nature, and then nature punishes us. Thus, it is said that some time ago the people of the Riviera, in their passion for gain, thought the swallow useless, and when the weary birds arrived from their long flight over the sea they were met with an electric discharge in the wires on which they alighted, and were slain by thousands for the service of feminine fashion in Paris. But the wise swallows soon discovered the trick, and ceased to come, and then the people of the Riviera would gladly have given thousands of pounds to bring them back again, because they discovered, too late, that their vineyards were devastated by myriads of insects which it was the mission of the swallow to destroy. Be sure of it, wherever you find a fact in nature, behind that fact there is a law. And, says Jesus Christ, it is even so in the moral world. There are certain laws, invariable as the rising sun, inevitable as the flowing of the tide, which may be ignored, but cannot be evaded, and which sooner or later make their presence felt in every human life. When a pestilent gloom hangs over the world, then the lightnings waken and go forth upon their roads of flame; when the laws of health are ignored,

then the plague calls together his grisly armies and camps in the abodes of men; when nations grow emasculated with luxury and drunken with pride, then war marshals his banners and calls on death and destruction to lead on their hosts to slaughter; for "where the carcass is, there the eagles gather together." And there is nothing wanton in it; it is the action of a law which is in itself beneficent; and when the carcass is swept away, and once more the pure winds blow across an untainted earth, we can learn to say of God's judgments as Wordsworth said of duty:

> "Stern Lawgiver, yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we any thing so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face."
>
> "Flowers laugh before thee in their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads,
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong"

Or we may put the same truth in another way. If we ask, What is the order of judgment which Christ reveals to us? the answer is that righteousness is sure of divine help, unrighteousness is secure of retribution. The Son of man comes suddenly, terribly, as the captain and avenger of the righteous; with him fly the war-eagles and the vultures for the

destruction of wickedness. Amid the noise of thunders that shake the world, of iron wings and cruel eyes which darken and terrify it, the Son of man comes, and by him the world is judged. It is a judgment which goes on every day. It is not the long-deferred anger of the Son, revealing itself in this or that great consummating act of justice. The judgment-day is that which "was, and is, and is to come." It was yesterday, it is to-day, it will be to-morrow. Its trumpets peal with every dawn. The everlasting doors are daily lifted up, that the King of glory may ride forth to judge the nations and the people with equity. The sheep and the goats are already separated, and every sunset is the seal of destinies. For every sunset marks the completion of some slow-working corruption, and overhears "the voice of that man in the twilight, like a late bird chirruping, 'Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,'" who knows not that "he is singing his death-song, and that he will come no more to the haunts where he has worn out and expended the life of his spirit."

We are told to-day that the maintenance of life is a more complex thing than many of us suppose, that every breath we breathe is virtually a victory over the forces of destruction which surround us. We are like men who are

safe only as long as we move ; when our active vigilance ceases death instantly drags us down to the dark chambers of corruption. We must maintain ourselves in a certain physical state for the air we breathe to invigorate us, for the same air which is life to the living is the force that works disease in the sickly and putrefaction in the dead. To the healthy man the world is full of the joy of life, to the sickly man of the peril of death. So Christ's teaching is that all the forces of the universe are upon the side of the good man and against the bad man. To the strong traveler who pushes his way over desert and mountain the vulture is no terror, the eagle is no foe. He looks up and sees the great golden wings of the eagle of the mountains, like a burnished shield flashing in the sun, and he rejoices in the vision of his strength and beauty. He sees the black speck which he knows is the hovering vulture, but he knows that he is his friend, who clears away putridity from his pathway and makes it safe for him to travel where many have perished. He watches the gathering storm, and knows that with the lightning comes the rain which will make his path tomorrow fresh and fragrant, and the awful rolling of the thunder is the voice of a friend and helper. Thus the force which is terror to the

wicked is salvation to the righteous. The pillar is darkness to these, but light to those. Righteousness need not fear the vulture; the vulture has no power against the living; it is only where the carcass is that the eagles gather together.

And now let us ask, Are these principles real? Can we indeed distinguish them? Is not the world after all a mere unintelligible puzzle? What evidence have we of this just and discriminating force of judgment of which Christ speaks?

Let us see if it be not true in relation to physical righteousness. It is not without profound meaning that the words holiness and health spring from the same root and have a similarity of significance. The holy man is he who has absolute health of mind and soul and body. He has full control of himself; his desires are temperate, his passions are held in leash, he uses life with just measurement and sobriety, and the consequence is that for him the joys of life last long and the vigor of life is preserved unto old age. But let a man give himself over to sins of impurity or appetite, and the record is soon graven on the body in weakness, suffering, decay. It is no fanatic fancy, it is the solemn verdict of universal experience that the wicked man does not live out half his days. Notable exceptions there are and may be, but that is the rule, and it is be-

yond question. The vital forces of life are wasted in pursuit of pleasure, and the oil in the lamp of life burns down in premature darkness. The vultures of retribution scent from afar the odor of moral corruption, for the carcass is there, the corrupt frame-work of a man who is dead in trespasses and sin, from whom the living spirit which makes a man a nobler and divine creature has already departed. We know that this is so. Already over some of us, so high we cannot see him, but there nevertheless, silent, steady, vigilant, the bird of death hovers, and, unless the process of corruption is stayed by the miracle of God's grace, will presently drop on us like a bolt out of the blue, and the judgment of God will consume us. There is no chance in the calculation; it is the working of inevitable law, that where the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered; and the vulture is simply the winged judgment of God that waits on moral putrefaction.

Or look at the working of the law among nations, for it is of a nation that Christ speaks. There have been two tremendous instances in our own times, enacted in all their tragic warning under our own eyes. In the Southern States of America, a quarter of a century ago, slavery was fast destroying the national conscience, and the open sore of its defilement

was poisoning the world. To the unthinking there was no visible sign of decay or retribution; every thing witnessed to an "unexampled prosperity." The blue sky had no thunder-cloud hanging on its edges, and in its cerulean splendor few noticed the solitary black spot, a mere moveless speck in the wide expanse of sunlight. But there were prophetic eyes in the North that recognized the sign and knew that it was the vulture poised in watchful patience above a gathering decay. In vain the warning was given; in vain the silver trumpet of Channing's eloquence and the warning note of Lowell's and Longfellow's and Whittier's poetry rang in the ears of a heedless nation. They recognized the deep abiding law of God, that where the carcass is, there the vultures gather together. Then, at last, the hour came when the vulture received the mysterious signal which sent him swooping upon his prey, and before the righteous anger of a regenerated people the pollution of slavery was swept away forever.

Even yet more striking is the case of France under the last empire. Every one in those days knew that Paris had become the moral plague-spot of Europe. Every one knew that the "Goddess of Lubricity," as Matthew Arnold phrased it, had there set up her court,

and that the leprosy of an unrestrained lasciviousness was eating into the very bone and sinew of the people. But few saw the vulture poised in the cloudless heaven waiting for his hour. France never seemed stronger, her fame was never more brilliant, her power never more feared, than in the hour when the cry rose in the streets of Paris, "*à Berlin!*" The judgments of God on corrupt nations had been wholly forgotten or ignored, and no one supposed it possible that within a few months a nation boasting the strongest armaments of Europe could be crushed into utter suppliance. Who thought of it, or believed it, when the hosts of Napoleon thronged out of Paris for the Rhine? Who prophesied it when the first telegram came with its flourish about the baptism of fire at Saarbruck? But, as the days wore on, there could no longer be any doubt that the vultures were gathering to their work. Corruption was there; a rotten court, a rotten capital, a rotten army; a mass of hideous disease which could no longer be hidden or healed. In a single day the empire fell. The vulture rose glutted from his feast—it had passed away. We see it all now. We know now what it meant. Even the most careless and least serious of historians is constrained to admit it. Once more the iron wheels of God's

judgment chariots had rolled through the nations, the voice of his thunder was heard, and the earth trembled, his righteousness was vindicated, and where the carcass was, there were the eagles gathered together.

Nor does it in the least weaken the lesson to reply that in such judgments the innocent suffer with the guilty. That is altogether inevitable. Nothing in my visit to the States struck me with so profound a pathos as those vast national cemeteries where often thousands lie buried, without a name, unknown but never unforgotten, the sacrifices of a nation on the altars of liberty and righteousness. If there were, indeed, no after-world, if this life were all we had, how irreparably cruel and unjust all this would appear! What wrong had these done that they should be thrust out of the sunlight into unrecorded graves? But just because this life is not every thing we may surely believe that God has great compensations hereafter for those who suffer innocently in the earthly punishments of guilt. We may say with Lowell,

> "Abstract war is horrid,
> I sign to that with all my heart;"

but must we not also recollect that

> "Civilization does get forrid,
> Sometimes upon a powder-cart?"

War is the price of progress, the price of liberty, of commerce, of nationality. Shall we not be sometimes content to pay the same price for purity, for faith, for righteousness, for virtue? War is the solemn martyrdom of nations. It is on a vast scale what personal martyrdom is on a small scale. These thousands who perish unnamed and unregarded "in one red burial blent," are surely, then, among those who lose their life that they may save it. They are the nameless martyrs out of whose agony the healing of the world comes, and they will not be forgotten when God awards the palm, unconscious as they may have been of any thing great or splendid in their sacrifice.

But it is of more importance to recollect how such lessons apply to our own national life. It is so easy to watch the judgments of God upon others, as men may watch a distant thunder-storm with an almost comfortable delight in its æsthetic grandeur, and to forget that lightning travels from the east unto the west, and is no respecter of persons or nationalities. I sometimes think that there are signs that we, too, in England are growing ripe for the judgments of God upon corruption. There are vices which are eating our life out, as they have the life of the nations which have gone before us. Think of the frantic shamelessness

of the race for wealth, the avarice of commerce, the cruelties of competition, the widespread profligacy and drunkenness; our heedlessness to the cry of national suffering, our complacent pride in the presence of the rising anger of the underpaid and famished drudges of society, the many blots upon our social life and our national policies, and say if there be no signs of tribulation, no need to scan the sky anxiously to see if the first sentinel vulture be not already posted there? I know not; I pray that it may not be so. But this I know, that for us, as for every people since the world began, corruption is the sure precursor of retribution. Neither historic fame nor present wealth can save us. When the love of righteousness ceases to inspire us, when public virtue perishes, and the old pious fear of God and the old patriotic sense of duty are exchanged for the unrestrained selfishness of individualism, then nothing can save us from the vulture. Already the vindictive lightning writes its fiery scroll of warning on the heavens, and happy shall we be if we obey the signal and seek healing before decay is complete and remedy impossible.

It is by the younger citizens of all great Christian peoples that these lessons most need to be learned. The future of the nation, of

the Church, of the world is with you. You must needs be the merchants, the writers, the senators of the future. The battle of life sweeps on, and the devastation of the years will soon leave you in the forefront of the fight. You will have to face the awful diapason of the guns, and be carried onward with the rush of battle, and the banners that fall from the tired hands of to-day it must be yours to bear on into the illimitable to-morrow. What sort of world are you going to make of that world of to-morrow? When Quebec was to be taken the War Office called its generals one by one and asked them what they thought of the project. The oldest said it was impossible. The middle-aged said it was so difficult as to be nearly impossible. All declined the task, until they came to Wolfe, the youngest general of all. He said, "I will do it, or die in the attempt;" and he did both. There spoke the voice of youth, and it is to the young that we must look for the enthusiasm, the moral valor, the heart of daring that is to redeem the future. But if you are to be the saviours of the future you must first ground yourself on the belief that God reigns, that God is righteous, that the only greatness of men or nations is righteousness. This was the soul of the old Puritanism, and this must be the animating

pulse of the new. What men this solemn, awe-inspiring sense of the righteousness of God produced in the men who laid the beams of empire in New England! What an England, great and strong, indeed, sprang up at the touch of this profound faith in the righteousness of God when Cromwell was its ruler! And it is by this, and this alone, that any kingdom of the saints can thrive. There will be no fiber in your morality, no continuity in your reforms, no permanence in your great movements, unless this is behind and at the root of all. Go out, and as with the trumpets of the dawn proclaim the new Puritanism; declare that no moral leper shall legislate for Christian peoples; declare that what is morally wrong cannot be politically right; declare an equal punishment for unchastity in man and woman alike; declare your ceaseless crusade against drunkenness and profligacy and gambling, and all the vices that spring from an immoral use of money, and live to build up the greater Britain of the greater soul, the New World of the nobler life; but remember that first of all and chief must come this awful vision of God's law, this awe-inspiring sense of God's righteousness. Get that, and you have got the vision that made martyrs strong and reformers confident. One thing, at least, the meanest youth can do for

the world—he can die for it. One thing the humblest may accomplish—he may live a life of faith in the Son of God, and act "ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." You can fear God and depart from evil; you can make the force of a noble character felt by all who know you; and in doing that you will have done something to build up a righteous nation.

> "So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When duty whispers low, 'Thou must!'
> The youth replies, 'I can!'"

Let us be glad, then, that there is a will higher than ours at work in the world. There is a Power mightier than armies, and more omnipotent than kings, before which all the thrones of earth and all its empires are but the playthings of a child. There is a force that streams round us and through us, which shapes the world and overrules its vast designs, confederacies, and purposes. When Robertson of Irvine was once traveling in the Tyrol he had for comrade a skeptic, and as they climbed higher into the black mouth of the mountains, discussing as they went, a sudden storm broke, and the live lightning leaped from crag to crag and the thunder called like a voice from pinnacle to pinnacle of torn rock and gleaming ice-peak. "Hark!" cried Robertson, "cannot

you hear what it says? It says, 'I AM, that I AM, yea, thou art! And," says Robertson, as he narrates the incident, "again the thunder pealed along the cliffs, as if God called, 'I AM, that I AM,' and the reverberations of the distant mountains to the Brenner of the Bernina answered, 'Yea, thou art!'" If we care to listen that voice reaches each of us out of the events of history and the common order of the daily life. It rebukes the shallow sentimentalism which discerns only the patience of God and not his righteousness, which exalts his love, but says nothing of his justice. There is no such separation of qualities possible in God. His judgments are his beneficences. His thunder clears the pathway for his sunlight, and the lightning and the light are one. If it be of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, it is equally of the Lord's mercy that evil is perpetually consumed. If goodness deserves to live, it is the plainest of corollaries that evil deserves to die. If there be no judgment of evil, neither can there be any coronation of good, for goodness can only exist by the extirpation of evil. And if we are not willing to acquiesce in the destruction of evil, it is because we do not love good with any true virility or depth of passion. When we love good with all our hearts we shall

realize what these truths mean ; we shall learn to praise God even for his judgments, and from the lips that are pale with the terror of the tempest, not less than from the lips that laugh and sing with the innocent joy of the sunlight, there will rise the perpetual litany : "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be our Lord!"

Blessed art thou among women.—*Luke i*, 28.

And they worshiped him.—*Matt. ii*, 11.

This, then, I believe to be—will you not admit it to be ?—woman's true place and power. . . . She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good, instinctively, infallibly wise—wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation ; wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service—the true changefulness of woman.—*John Ruskin.*

X.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF WOMANHOOD.

"AND they worshiped Him," not her; the infant, not the mother; and thus the supreme note of the gospels is struck. Some impartation of divine wisdom, some gleam of divine insight guided these men to the true object of worship. We may be sure that they were not insensible to the appealing pathos of the scene. It was a scene which poets have described and great painters have painted over and over again with every grace and force of human art and eloquence. Motherhood is always beautiful; but here it found its apotheosis. Here was the woman who had become the mother of the world's hope, who had given birth to the world's Redeemer. Pale with that pain of birth, she lay there in the humble lodging, and on her bosom slept the unconscious child. Up to this point she had been the sacrifice; she had borne the shame and agony for the healing of the world. But from the moment the divine child is born she recedes into silence and insignificance. It is he who is worshiped;

she who is forgotten. It is he who is to move onward in the gaze of the world; she who is to stand aside in meek seclusion and silence of heart. For thirty years at least her Son is to pass his life beneath her eyes. All that she does for him in this period finds no record. "To live, to suffer, and to be forgotten; that is woman's *saga*," says a great poet; and that is the noble summary of Mary's life. We catch but faint glimpses of her during her Son's troubled ministry. She is at the cross, and at the first meeting of the disciples after the ascension, and then she disappears utterly from history. She has lived and suffered, and is forgotten. She has fulfilled the mission of woman's great renunciation.

To-night * I speak to those who are filled with the first ardor and hope of youth, and I may seem to strike a wrong note when I speak of renunciation. To say so much seems to cast a shadow of dishonor on Mary and all womanhood. To be forgotten is not felt to be an enviable fate. Most of us are eager for applause, for recognition, for remembrance. It seems to us little less than an insult that he who has done or suffered much for others should pass into obscurity unrewarded and

* This address was delivered as the matriculation sermon of the Woman's College, Baltimore.

even unrecognized. But we have to recollect that most of the best work and the real heroism of the world is performed by quiet souls, to whom fame would seem an affront and publicity a sort of hishonor. How much did Mary do for her child, of which all the world reaps the fruit to-day? Was it not her voice that first instructed him in truth and taught him to teach others? In the hours of childish sickness and trouble whose hands but hers nursed the hope of the world? Well may Whittier pray for all mothers:

> "Make her hands like the hands of Jesus,
> Blessing the little one:
> Make her lips like the lips of Mary,
> Kissing her blessed Son."

And how much of the strength of Christ's life came from that quiet home in Nazareth, where this most blessed of women moved like a sacred light and shed a holy fragrance on the air! She asked no higher sphere. To be the mother of the Christ was enough for her. To stand behind the scenes unknown, unapplauded, unseen, was all that she desired. And thus we learn that woman's work in the world is different from that of men; her sphere is different, her spirit and temper are different; and to estimate the life of Mary aright these things must be recollected.

Now, to put the truth in this way may seem to teach the inherent inferiority of woman; in reality it teaches nothing of the kind. The difference between man and woman is not a difference of degree, but of order. Woman does not and cannot emulate man in many departments of physical activity. It is not for her to lead armies, to guide fleets upon the ocean, or to stand in the more laborious ranks of toil upon the land. It is for here to share all the knowledge, all the wisdom, all the intellectual activities of the world. But essentially man is ever the worker and fighter, the bread-winner, the husband or band of the house, cementing its walls with the sweat of labor and guarding it against the forces of dissolution which are without. The glory of a young man is his strength; and in so far the pagan ideal of manhood has a truth to express and enforce. On that ground woman cannot challenge or displace man.

> "For woman is not undeveloped man,
> But diverse; could we make her as the man
> Sweet love were slain; his truest bond is this,
> Not like to like, but like in difference."

But difference does not imply inferiority. There are other qualities which go to the making of perfect human life besides strength, just as there are other qualities besides the untem-

pered wealth of sunlight which make the spring-tide and the summer. Perfect human life needs sweetness as well as strength, the element of tenderness as well as of force. Life is not all lived in the arena and the street, and behind the victories of the market-place lies the fact of the home. When a man steps out into the glare of public labor he is already what the home has made him. It is the eternal and inalienable heritage of woman to mold man, to nurture his body into strength and his mind into soundness, to equip him for the warfare of life and inspire him for its victories, to breathe through him the wishes of her soul and teach him how to gain the ideals which her purity reveals, her ambition craves, her love demands. The good woman, by her intuitions, reaches a realm of truth often denied to man in his most logical deductions, and then she becomes virtually the inspiration of man, and it is thus woman who makes the world. "The souls of little children," says one of the noblest women writers of our time, "are marvelously tender and delicate things, and keep forever the shadow that first falls on them, and that is a mother's, or at least a woman's. There never was a great man who had not a great mother; it is scarcely an exaggeration. The first six years of our life makes us; all

that is added later is veneer. The meanest girl who dances and dresses becomes something higher when her children look up into her face and ask her questions. It is the only education we have which they cannot take from us." It is a mistake to say that this is the only education, but, at least, is it not a great education? What higher dignity can we conceive than the dignity of shaping in silence and patience the forces that mold and guide the world? Can that sphere be called narrow from which such potent influences stream? That which woman confers on man is moral light and sweetness—

> "Till at the last she set herself to man
> Like perfect music unto noble words."

There is no strife for pre-eminence between them, no superiority or inferiority. The difference is of order, not degree; and that is what St. Paul means when he says that "woman is the glory of the man."

Now when we come to ask wherein the blessedness of Mary's womanhood consisted, the first answer is, in its exquisite purity. It is as the *Virgin* Mary she is spoken of in the creeds and remembered by the world. From the first moment when she appears upon the stage of action there is an affecting simplicity,

a delicate, flower-like purity, which distinguishes her and makes her the queen of women; and it is this conception which has sunk deepest into the minds of the great artists who have endeavored to limn those unknown features. There is not a single painter who has violated this tradition. Mary always looks out upon us with the placid gaze of an untroubled purity, the grace of mingled innocence and sorrow, the charm of a soul undefiled and separate from sinners; and in this she is the type of all that is highest in womanhood; the crown and sum of what womanhood can be in its noblest development and most regal grace.

We naturally ask, What is purity? Purity is innocence, but something more than innocence; it is modesty, but somthing more than modesty. It is the sacred fire which glows behind both and illumines the whole nature. It is the divine armor in which womanhood is defended; it is the invisible raiment in which womanhood is clothed; a sort of garment woven of the light, a luminous and intangible attire through which we see woman as in a mystic transfiguration. It was no vain allegory of the poet that the lion crouched before the maiden; that there was something in that virginal purity and freshness which subdued the savage passion of his heart and tamed the

brute pulsations of his blood. Mean and gross things hate the presence of purity as base reptiles of the dust shrink dismayed before the sunlight; and for various reasons, reasons largely based on temperament and education, purity is the crowning quality of womanhood. It is the bloom of human life which cleaves to woman longer than to man, and is sacredly preserved from rough winds by the providence of birth and the very order of human society. In woman man has always realized the ideal of purity, and her impurity is a shock to all that man holds dearest. Purity is, indeed, the weapon by which she masters man, and the pure woman is thus to him something angelic, the very pride and glory of the world.

There is in the National Gallery of London a picture which has always impressed me, and which has quickened and refreshed my imagination for many years. It is the picture of St. Helena receiving the vision of her martyrdom. She is asleep, and a most moving and exquisite tranquillity fills the face as with a gentle light. The heavy eyelids have faint purple shadows round them, the full, eager lips are gently parted, the brow is smooth with the benediction of repose, the pose of the figure is full of a pathetic langour; and above her, seen through parted clouds, is the impend-

ing cross. The whole secret of womanhood is in that noble figure; for the purple shadows speak of suffering, the broad, calm brow of thought, the full lips of vigorous life, while the dress falling in its simple folds speaks of voluntary poverty, the drooped, unringed hand of renunciation, of work well done, of calm and quiet pulses, of a lovable austerity. There is no tremulous prophetic aureole upon the brow, nor is one needed; we know at once this woman is a saint. We know at once what that deep langour means; it is the repose of one who works so unrestingly for others that when sleep comes it is a divine exhaustion which draws the soul forth gently into starry visions. Yet it is no ethereal saint we see. There is a breadth about the figure, a suppleness and grace that speak loudly of a healthy life. The gladness of the sun has passed into that smilling face, and the freshness of the earth and the glow of human hopes. But what we chiefly feel as we gaze is the vital force of purity which streams like a subtle magnetism from the figure. Base thoughts are not possible in the presence of this woman. If those eyelids lifted we know well what we should see—the clear, untroubled gaze of a wise innocence, which would pierce into our souls and shame us out of mean and evil pas-

sions. And it is thus that every woman should impress the world. It is the gift of every woman who is true to the innocent thoughts of girlhood to carry with her an atmosphere of purity which brings with it cleansing for the world. And thus the humblest woman may be a saint, enthroned within some sacred niche of the temple of humanity, and inspiring reverence for all that is good and true and beautiful, because she herself is reverent of purity and truth and goodness.

And this very instinct of man which clothes woman with reverence, and makes her the ideal of virtue, confers on you an awful power. According as the ideal is high so is the shock of disappointment when it is overthrown. When we find in you neither the meekness of faith nor the obedience of service; when no serious purpose fills your life; when life for you appears to be a thing of mean and trivial aims, a vain and restless search after amusement, full of wasted hours and idle hopes, then, whether you know it or not, you are inflicting an infinite damage on the world. Woman will always be reverenced as long as she deserves reverence. When men cease to reverence women it will be because women have utterly destroyed their own claim to honor. You do that when you waste in dress

and gossip a life given for sympathy and service. You lead the world, then, to believe that the old chivalrous dream of reverence for women was only a dream because there is nothing in you to merit reverence, and that sainthood was the delusive fantasy of mediæval times, because you show how impotent you are to sanctify these modern times.

This glory of purity, of purity which inspires reverence and wins blessedness, is the first glory of womanhood; I pray you to preserve it. And remember, even for the girl most delicately reared and sedulously defended, that it is not altogether an easy task in a day like ours. There is no cloistral seclusion in a land where liberty of printing is allowed. The basest secrets of life are betrayed to the gaze of the young and innocent in the daily press, and the press is no respecter of persons. And over and above all this there is a so-called literature of realism to-day—a realism of the sewer, which rakes the gutter for offal, and sees nothing but the base and hideous side of life and cares to paint nothing else, and that is a perpetual menace to female purity. It passes like an insidious disease across the thresholds of the most carefully guarded houses, and finds its prey in boudoir and workroom alike. In a single hour it travels over

the pure mind like a withering blast, and leaves barrenness where there was bloom, and exchanges spring-tide freshness for sterility. It strikes most fatally at those in whom the imagination is most ardent and the intellect most curious. It is a destroying angel which haunts the school-room and the street; it finds its most numerous victims among the most defenseless of the race—the young, the guileless, the undefiled. I have seen books in women's hands which it were a shame to read and an offense to write. I have known, when I have seen such sights, that whatever qualities of intellect such a woman might possess, there was an ineradicable stain and taint upon her nature; and I have lived long enough to know what the fruit of such reading is. Therefore, I pray you to remember that what no force can capture may be sapped from within. Remember that touching line of Landor's:

> "Modesty who, when she goes,
> Is gone forever;"

and remember that there is a modesty of the intellect as of the demeanor. The power of woman is departed when the freshness of her virginal modesty is destroyed, and henceforth the blessedness of woman is denied her.

The second element in the blessed womanhood of Mary was her tenderness and meek-

ness. We cannot doubt that the charm of that home at Nazareth was in the tenderness of Mary. We know that with his brethren Christ had little in common; but between the divine Son and the blessed mother there was a bond of perfect sympathy. She alone understood him. There were angel presences, angel messages, and human prophecies, and the many significant signs of a divine childhood which she pondered in her heart. It was not possible for a mother to forget those marvelous occurrences which surrounded the birth of her child. There was the link of a divine secret between them, a secret which, no doubt, she imperfectly comprehended, but which would certainly color her relationships to him with a strange tenderness. And her meekness was conspicuously displayed on the very threshold of his ministry. When the hour had come for his first miracle, the hour had also come for the renunciation of her maternal rights in him. Henceforth he was the world's, not hers. He was the Son of man, not the Son of Mary; and the merely human bonds which bound him to Nazareth were snapped, and snapped forever. He knew that when he said, not with rude abruptness, as we often imagine, but with a sigh of infinite love, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" It

was Christ's farewell to the home. Henceforth he had no place to lay his head, and to that irreconcilable separation she assented with perfect meekness. She knew that his obedience to her was ended. In a moment the relations were reversed, and she obeyed him. She assented without a murmur to this obliteration of her rights of motherhood, and it is the voice of an exquisite womanly meekness which says: "Whatsoever he saith unto thee, do it."

Tenderness and meekness—the claim of tenderness you allow, do you resent the charge of meekness? Does it seem a signal of inferiority to confess that the heritage of woman is obedience and meekness? Recollect that these are the highest and rarest of all Christian virtues. Recollect that in intellectual pursuits humility has always been the note of all great minds. Recollect that Christ did not praise power, but submissiveness, and did not say, "Blessed are the strong," but "Blessed are the meek." Perhaps you do not understand the word, and therefore you resent it. You interpret it as subservience, whereas it means nothing of the kind. When I want to interpret meekness I think of my mother, and of all that motherhood means. I see her taking no place in the restless publicities of life, but moving contentedly in the sphere of house-

hold toil, with fingers that were often weary but rarely rested, and a spirit which recognized no drudgery in the service of life. I see her, not incurious on the controversies of the hour, but turning from them to the contemplation of God, and reposing in meek reliance on his word, while others doubted and deserted. I see the spectacle of the infinite considerateness of motherhood, and you have seen it too; and what does it teach you if not this, that it is the obedience of woman to the instincts of her heart which makes her life a blessedness, and the meekness of woman in her religious faith which keeps alive the pieties of life? The triumph of woman's obedience is the human home, where daily tasks win neither wealth nor praise, and the value of her meekness is its capacity for faith. It was only a woman, I think, who could have written:

"I ask thee for a thoughtful love,
  With constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
  And wipe the weeping eyes;
And a heart at leisure from itself
  To feel and sympathize.

"I would not have the restless will,
  That wanders to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
  Or secret thing to know;
I would be treated as a child,
  And guided where I go."

O, that is the very distillation of the purest spirit of Christianity, the very essence of the law of Christ! And it is for you to keep alive the fires of human piety. You do so when you teach the little children to lisp their prayers at night and when you fill the household with the serenity of your trust in the day of sorrow. You do so when you teach the world the value of daily self-sacrifices and denials, without which children could not be reared nor the sanctity of the home maintained. You do so when you turn from the heated atmosphere of theological discussion to the place of prayer, or to the service of the sick, and vindicate thereby the power of faith and the Godlikeness of human charity. That is the realm in which you move, or may move, with undisputed mastery. The name of Adam signified "red earth;" the name of Eve signifies "the living one." And in the realm of faith man is still "of the earth, earthy"—a questioning, halting creature; but woman is the living one, with whom trust is the breath of life. We look to you to keep the faith. The first words of prayer that whisper in our ears of an eternal hope we hear from you; the last hand that soothes the pain of dying men and closes the eyelids of the dead is evermore a woman's hand; and when by your meekness

you keep alive the piety of man you do more for the world than those who found empires or explain philosophies; you become the glory of the man, and you earn the supreme blessedness of womanhood.

The third great quality of Mary was the quality of *silent service*, and this is the third element of her blessedness. It is not enough to say that the glory of woman is that she is the helper of man. No great cause succeeds without woman. No nation can be great that does not reverence woman and does not offer the freest scope and sphere for her influence to be felt; and I confess that we, as Protestant Churches, have not yet recognized to the full the power of service that is in woman. We have left it to Catholics to form sisterhoods of merciful visitation. We, in our dread of Mariolatry, have forgotten the women who ministered to Jesus, and have ignored the presence of women in the Church. Not altogether, indeed; we, too, have had our Dinah Morrises in the early days of Methodism; we have to-day our Sisters of the People working in the slums of London; and here and there we have had our Protestant St. Theresas, our Florence Nightingales, our Elizabeth Frys, our Sister Doras. I do not say that every one of you should go and do likewise. This is not

the lesson or the message of Mary's life. You cannot all find your mission in the slums, in the prison, in the hospital; but I will tell you what you can do—you can attain the private sainthood of self-denial and sympathy; you can find some sick sister to whom your visit would be sunlight; some little child to be made cheerful with your love; some obscure spot of earth to be brightened by your charity. You cannot row out against the darkness of the night, as Grace Darling did, to rescue the shipwrecked; but you may find next door to you some forlorn soul, tossed in the wild storms of life, to succor and to save. You cannot find cloistral seclusion, as the virgins of the early Church did, nor is it well you should; but you can make the nursery a cloister where the fruits of God ripen, and the store, the school, the home a place where the fragrance of holiness may be felt.

Many of you will toil all your life for bread; many of you will be condemned to something worse than that—the inactivity of life which is removed from the strenuous need for work. Some of you may never know what it is to have a home of your own, and life may seem to you to spell defeat. But whosoever you may be, whatsoever is your lot, you can be blessed among women by your helpful sym-

pathy in great causes and your example of perfect and compassionate purity. "They also serve who only stand and wait!" Is that an inferior lot which teaches the great lesson of self-abnegation to a selfish world, and supplies the impulse of endeavor to those who toil, and of resignation to those who suffer? Is not she who passes her life in household duties doing that which the mother of Christ was not ashamed to do? Is not she who brightens childish eyes doing what He did who blessed the little children, and who was always ready to obey the voice that called him to the suffering? Is the ministry of love nothing, nor the ministry of peace? O, you have a great heritage; a unique and noble glory is yours! It is yours to be the purifiers and ennoblers of human life, and this is the blessedness of woman.

This, at least, is certain—that whatever rights you have Christianity has given you. The debt of woman to Jesus Christ is simply incalculable. It is he who has emancipated her from the tyrannies of human lust and recognized the true domain of her powers and endowments. It is Christianity which has broken the yoke of unjust laws and has rolled away the stone from the sepulcher where womanhood was entombed. It is from Chris-

tianity that all future emancipations of womanhood must come. And the return of womanhood to Christ has been always unstinted faith and love. She has broken the box of frankincense upon his head and has washed his feet with tears. Have you done that? Have you recognized your Deliverer? Have you consecrated your sympathies to him and to his service? You then become not only the glory of man but the glory of the man Christ Jesus; for in your womanhood Christ is glorified, and through you he again reaches out his hands to the world in love and healing. These, then, are the great qualities of Mary which make her supremely blessed among women, and they are the qualities which make all womanhood blessed. Yet the wise men worshiped not her, but her Son. And why should they worship not Mary, but Jesus? Because those very qualities are the qualities of Christ himself. They were his blessedness as well as hers. If Christ had been only man, or if Christ had been only God, there might have been a need to supplement his qualities with the softer virtues of the Virgin; but he was more than man and more than God; he was humanity. "In him all fullness dwelt;" the fullness of womanhood as well as of manhood. It is impossible to study

the life of Christ without feeling how entirely feminine he was as well as masculine. He was man in his courage, his contempt of peril, his definiteness of idea, his public activity, his passionate hatred of hypocrisy, his broad and luminous perception of things. But it was the womanliness of Christ we meet in him who took strange children in his arms and blessed them, and wept beside the grave, and sat at supper with the head of John upon his bosom. We cannot, alas! conceive of a man as womanly without contempt, or of a woman as manly without disgust. We conceive of each as having virtues and qualities of their own; but in Christ's nature these two sets of qualities were truly one. In him there is neither male nor female, bond nor free. No soldier had more of moral courage, no mother more of compassionate tenderness. He can defy Herod as "that fox"—there breathes the man. He can wash his disciples' feet and bless the children—there acts the woman! And all this he teaches us in his oft-reiterated title, "The Son of man," by which he means the son of humanity; the consummate flower of the tree of human life, the exhibition of all that is manliest and womanliest alike; the one perfect nature which met the wants of all and embodied the highest virtues of all. And thus

Mary in her purity, her meekness, and her service is but the reflection of a yet more perfect purity and meekness and service—the purity of Him whom no man could convict of sin; the meekness of the Lamb of God; the service of him who gave himself a sacrifice upon the cross for the world. Shakespeare speaks of a man's tears as "the mother in his eyes;" so we may speak of Christ's tenderness as the mother in his heart—the motherhood of the world which lived there in his infinite compassion, as though, so to speak, Mary's nature were included in his and reincarnated in his most womanly sympathy.

But if we ask, Why, then, does a vast proportion of Christendom worship Mary to-day? the answer is very simple. It is because this womanly tenderness of Christ has been forgotten. Those little shrines which the traveler sees in Catholic countries; those rude images and paintings of the mother and her child, before which the peasant lays his offering of mountain flowers as he goes to his work at dawn; or those rapt Madonnas of the old masters before which half the world stands in admiration, and a great section of mankind in adoration still—O, it is easy enough and cheap enough to despise them! It is easy enough to laugh at a peasant laying flowers

before a tawdry doll or bending his knees before a rude daub of a mother or child; but I do not laugh, because I see the idea for which this stands. That doll, that mother with the child, typifies to millions of lonely and troubled human souls the secret of a divine tenderness. The bruised heart wants no philosophies or ethics, it simply wants love, compassion, sympathy; and because the early Church made the fatal error of exalting Christ as Judge of the quick and the dead, and forgetting him as the tender human helper, the world turned to Mary, the blessed mother, to fill the gap in their conception of the divine. When the Church forgot the man who wept, and remembered only the man who judged; when the words of the Good Shepherd were lost in the fierce music of the *Dies Iræ*, and through the Churches of Christendom the peal of angry judgment trumpets sounded, and in their terrible reverberations the appeals of the Son of man were drowned, then the insatiable thirst of the human heart for tenderness led it to the vision of the mother of God, the womanly and pathetic figure of the most sorrowful and blessed among women. The instinct was right, its direction was wrong. We acknowledge the instinct, and we give it the true direction when we proclaim the tenderness of

Jesus. In him, I say once more, all fullness dwells, and because he meets all the needs of this various humanity, to him alone every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is both man and God to the glory of the Father.

Jesus is the true vine, the life indeed; but not the less we are right in gathering from the Virgin's example such lessons as we may for the perfection and strengthening of character. We should indeed err if through fear of over-honoring the most blessed among women we neglect to learn from her as we learn courage from the example of Stephen, or penitence from the life of Peter. And what is it that this life of Mary most clearly teaches us? It is the beauty of self-renunciating love, and that such a love is a source of blessedness indeed. We know of no marvels in her death but this, of no assumption into heaven which vies with her Son's in glory, of no power of intercession which is hers in the eternal world that every other ransomed spirit does not share. But we do recognize her simplicity and modesty and sweetness, the touching meekness and unselfishness of her life; and for these things we honor her and would fain have her copied. The very essence of the signification of that life seems to lie in its humility;

that it made no claim to honor; that it craved no remembrance; that it was content to toil and be forgotten. And so the greatest Catholic writer of our times, in describing her death, has said: "It became Him who died for the world to die in the world's sight. It became the great Sacrifice to be lifted up on high as a light that could not be hid. But she, the lily of Eden, who had always lived out of sight of man, fittingly did she die in the garden's shade amid the sweet flowers in which she had lived. Her departure made no noise in the world. The Church went about her common duties, preaching, converting, suffering. There were persecutions; there were fleeings from place to place; there were martyrs; there were triumphs; at length the rumor spread abroad that the mother of God was no longer upon earth." Yes, her departure made no noise in the world; but that is the fate of the loveliest and noblest lives the world has ever known. To be contented, if such be God's will, with a life of humble tasks and simple joys, to do good day by day without supposing that we earn thereby either praises or reward—O, these are more difficult things than they appear, harder almost than the soldier's heroism or the martyr's sacrifice. But in this life which is content to love, to suffer, and be for-

gotten, is the secret of a great peace, an infinite blessedness. Such was the life of Mary, such was her supreme blessedness. "Blessed are the pure in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Love is the fulfilling of the law.—*Rom. xiii*, 10.

For love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.—*John vi*, 7.

Men may die without any opinions, and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom ; but if we be without love, what will knowledge avail? I will not quarrel with you about opinions. Only see that your heart be right with God. I am sick of opinions. Give me good and substantial religion, a humble, gentle love of God and man.—*John Wesley.*

XI.

THE LAST ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIANITY.

THERE are two desires in man of which we are all conscious, though we are not always conscious of them, and they are the deepest desires of which the human nature is capable. The first of these is to be the highest that we can become. All religions arise out of this need in man to be something which he is not, but which he dimly feels that he ought to be. For man is haunted by a vision of moral excellence which disquiets him, rebukes him, and allures him. He is like a child reared under the shadow of a throne, and born in the purple, who by some untoward fate is left to grow up in squalor and poverty, and who cannot forget the "glories he has known and that imperial palace whence he came." He covets that which is above him; he sees dim shapes of power and light and sweetness that ever move before him; he longs for the moral excellence which he does not possess. It is to that instinct which all religions appeal; they are the more or less imperfect answers which

are made to that passion for excellence and goodness and moral perfection which has stung man with a divine hunger and thirst from the beginning of the ages.

The second dominant desire of man is to attain and enjoy the most that he can; and this desire takes a hundred forms. He wants to be strong, to be wise, and to be happy. He seeks strength, for the glow of vitality is bliss, and knowledge, for knowledge is power, and happiness, because there is within him an unappeasable appetite for joy. In one the desire for joy takes noble forms, and he craves the visions of art and the rapture of music, and seeks to live in a radiant atmosphere of delight and beauty. In another it takes grosser forms, and the flesh is lapped in pleasurable sensations while the spirit perishes. In one the supremacy of learning is coveted, in another the supremacy of power; in one the intellectual part is dominant, in another those practical faculties which seize upon the good things of life with an iron grasp and retain them at all hazards. Before this tremendous fact of man's passion for joy religion has often stood reproachful, vindictive, and almost paralyzed. It has not known how to grapple with it, and therefore has denounced it; it has replied to it with the hair shirt and the whip

of the flagellant, with the somberness of a Catholic or Puritan asceticism, the home where the happy instincts of childhood are extinguished, the convent or the monastery, where the flesh is ceaselessly macerated; and then what wonder is it that men have eagerly turned to the prince of this world for help, and have sunk under the charms of his terrible sorcery! What marvel that men have rebelled against a religion that has made the world joyless, and have taken refuge in a paganism in whose lips laughter lives and in whose lap the rose-leaves of pleasure lie heaped for our delight! Let it be put down as one of those facts which nothing can alter, that man is created with a faculty for joy, and be sure of it that is no divine religion which attempts to crush that faculty. We must enjoy. We turn instinctively to bright skies, to bright colors, and to bright natures, and we repudiate the somber and the grave. The only question, therefore, is how shall we enjoy? What is true enjoyment, and how is it to be obtained?

And it may be noticed, further, that of these two desires—the desire to be and the desire to attain—the first desire often dies away, but the second lasts. Men cease longing to *be* something; they never cease longing

to possess something. They give up the quest of character; they never give up the quest of happiness. They follow that false grail of the world's delight through fen and bog, by crag and moor, by pathless waste and haunted wood, with ever a new hunger growing in their heart, content if it gleams upon them but for a moment in splendid witchery, and if they may but drink of the cup of its exhilarating sorcery once before they die. How wonderfully do men recover themselves from the defeats of life! How they rise up again under the arrows of outrageous fortune, and gather the torn robe of their happiness about them, and begin again to weave the shining weft! How they race after bubbles, fight for trifles, pluck the thorns of failure from their flesh, and again renew the quest after that fragile shining shape of earthly happiness that seems to glide through the glimmering woods before them and call them with bewitching incantations! And then at last men grow weary—very weary—and they want to die. They have sought and they have not found. They have spent their money for that which is not bread; they have built their palace of delight with the stones of darkness and the walls of confusion. The end we all know. The paganism which deifies mere happiness has never had

but one ending, either in the life of ancient Greece or modern Europe; the end is disillusionment, disappointment, and desire for death, and its death chant, its confession of failure, is still heard in the song of the modern poet, who sings:

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank, with brief thanksgiving,
Whatever gods there be,
That no life lives forever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

That is the end of the quest of mere happiness—the desire to possess outliving the desire to be; nothing left but this—to rejoice that life is over, to rejoice in the hope that it cannot be renewed, and that it sinks at last into that infinite void where

"Sun nor stars shall waken,
Nor any change of light,
Nor sound of water shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night."

Now these two passages are at once the ratification, the justification, and the explanation of these two desires—to be and to enjoy. You

wish to be something, do you? Then here is the law set before you—a series of divine landmarks setting the course by which you may travel to moral excellence. You wish to enjoy, do you? Here is the command, "Learn to love." Learn to be rid of peevishness and jealousy and envy; learn to be tender and compassionate and self-sacrificing, and you will have lit a fire upon the altar of the heart which will keep the whole life in a glow of delight, even in the darkest night of time. But you say, "I cannot obey the law." Yes, you can. If you once learn to love properly you will obey the law, "for love is the fulfilling of the law." So, then, you see these two desires to be and to enjoy are fused into one, and they admit of one answer. Love is the secret of becoming any thing that is great and noble in this life; and to be great and noble with the excellence with which love clothes us is to attain the very sum of human felicity. And the significance of these two texts is that here you have Christianity in its final solution, in its last analysis. Doctrines fade away, prophecies fade, complex ethical axioms are forgotten, the metaphysics of theology are all swept aside, and there is one thing only which remains—that is, love, and love is Christianity. Believe what you will and do what you will, become what

you may and enjoy the highest as you may, if you do not love you are not a Christian, and you have not found the true triumph of life. Paul and John both found this to be true in their own experience. It is no unconsidered language, it is the wisdom of a life-time; it is no mere personal confession, it is the exposition of a great principle which is to change the world. They do not underrate doctrine or theology, but they see that there is something more important than either—to love God and man with a perfect heart. They have, in fact, reached that stand-point which is always gained by all great religious souls, the stand-point from which love appears to be every thing, character all in all; the stand-point of Wesley, when he wrote—

> "My brethren, friends and kinsmen these
> Who do my heavenly Father's will,
> Athirst to be whate'er thou art,
> And love their God with all their heart."

"Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Whosoever loveth is born of God."

Now, these texts admit of a series of definite propositions which may be, so to speak, a series of golden stairs up which we may climb to that coign of vantage where these two apostles stood. The first golden stair is this: We ask, What is the origin of love? Chris-

tianity answers, *Love is of God.* Hatred, then, is not of God; it is of the devil. Selfishness, jealousy, envy, all that spoils the gentle and the perfect life in us—heedlessness of others, forgetfulness of the wishes and the hopes of others, the egoism which ignores others, the strenuousness of personal purpose which pushes them aside, to say nothing of the sarcastic tongue which delights to inflict pain, and the vanity which will sacrifice a reputation for a stroke of wit, or the ambition which hustles all weaker folk aside that it may reach its own coveted goal—all this is not of God; it is of the devil. The original impress of God upon this world was an impress of love. There was a time when gentleness, tenderness, considerateness stamped the whole creation, and therefore an unbroken peace covered the world as with a garment. Wherever you find these qualities still, they are of God; they are divine relics of his workmanship, something saved out of the wreck of man, fair stretches of green landscape not submerged beneath the flood of evil, or else recovered from it. Wherever love exists it is a flower of God's growing, for he alone possesses the seed. God is love, and love is of God. "Every one that loveth is born of God."

Does any one ask, What is love? Are we

in any doubt as to what it is? Do we ever mistake it when we meet it? Or do we think of love habitually as a matter of mere sexual attraction, or as a sort of family quality? That is just where so wide a gulf yawns between paganism and Christianity. The god of love in paganism is—what? Cupid! A mischievous boy, a winged and beautiful shape, a troubler of men's hearts, a fugitive and irresponsible visitor, who sets the nerves tingling with passion, but does not touch, and cannot touch, the moral nature. The God of love in Christianity is Christ, who went about doing good, and pleased not himself, but gave his life a ransom for many. Compare these two visions, if comparison be possible, and mark how vast the difference. What wonder is it that love, as described by the ancients, is usually a bitter heritage, a golden apple of passionate contention, and that its records are the records of the ardor, the distress, and the unavailing sorrow of the individual? But the love which Christianity presents to us is something that forgets itself and is lost in a renunciation which is beatitude. It is not limited, personal, or egotistic; it overleaps all common human relationships, and finds higher relationships with all loving hearts. It comes with no purple wings, beating a delicate and perfumed air, and stir-

ring the mere nerves of a man with passionate delight; but it comes as a divine power, which enters his heart and transforms it. It creates a brother in every man and a sister in every woman. It binds a golden girdle round the globe, and claims all within it in the name of the love of God. It enters every avenue of human life, and sanctifies it. It is mercy when it meets the criminal, sympathy when it meets the fallen, compassion when it meets the suffering, labor when it meets the lost, renunciation when it meets the poor, sacrifice when it meets the sinful, and it is in all a divine power which men cannot help recognizing to be divine. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the love of God—love itself incarnated and embodied in the flesh, and those who would learn what love is must learn of him.

It follows, then, that there is a second golden stair which we may climb. "Love is of God;" that is the first stair. The second is "Love in morality." "Love," says the apostle Paul, "is the fulfilling of the law." Let us pause again and ask, What, then, is law? Law is a series of instructions and restraints to make us like God. It begins at the very lowest level of things and tells us not to steal, not to covet, not to lie, and not to murder. But these crimes and vices are not so much causes as

effects. Look at them, and you will see at once that they are the fruit of something else. For example, were we not, I think about a year ago, having a terrible illustration of what this means? For we were then reading, day by day, of a murder that had been committed in the swamps of Niagara, and such was the solidarity of the human race that that isolated deed was discussed right round the globe. We saw it all enacted, like some stage drama, before our very eyes. We saw this man, an Oxford graduate, a man of good family, a man reared in honorable traditions, leading his victim on and on to some lonely spot in that dismal swamp, and then the pistol-shot rings, and without remorse he turns away, leaving his victim—who has eaten with him, jested with him, and trusted in him—to die miserably and unpitied. We tried this man for murder, but that red blossom of murder was only the outward sign of something else. Go deeper to the root, and you will see that he wants to steal, and he covets, and he lies before he wants to murder. These were the active causes of the crime; this was the black sap which fed the tree upon which this hideous blossom of murder at last sprang into life. And reduce all these things to a sentence, and you have said every thing when you have said,

"This man did not love." If he had loved his friend he would not have lied to him; if he had loved him he would not have coveted his money, still less could he have pushed him out of life for the sake of paltry gain, which—such is the irony of crime—he never even handled. For that unhappy youth literally love would have been the "fulfilling of the law."

And you may take the commandments one by one and apply this test to them, and you will see at once that they would not have been needed if only men had loved one another. Do you need to be told not to murder any one you love, not to defraud him, not to covet his possessions, not to dishonor his home? Why, we not only cannot do it, we simply cannot conceive the thought of doing it. Get love, then, and you cannot help keeping the law. Get love, and you cannot help being moral. It may seem but a scanty equipment to produce perfection, and so the seven notes of music may seem to be a scanty equipment to produce the heaven-born melodies of a Handel or Beethoven. But see how they use them—of what infinite and glorious combinations are they capable! How the highest and deepest emotions of our nature find liberation and a language as we thrill to the majestic strains

which purify and exalt us, which give us visions of truth, of self, of heaven, of God, and of the joy of God, which no speech could utter and no articulate array of words could express. Yet there are but seven notes of music in it all, something a child might learn in an hour, but which a Handel or a Beethoven cannot exhaust in a life-time. So it is with this supreme quality of love! It is capable of all but infinite combinations and interpretations; it utters the grand music of heroism and the soft lute-music of courtesy; it is patriotism, it is altruism, it is martyrdom; it stoops to the smallest things of life and it governs the greatest; it controls the temper and it regulates the reason; it extirpates the worst qualities and it develops and refines the best; it reforms and transforms the whole man into the image of God, for there is no height of character to which love cannot lift a man, and there is no height of character possible without it. Love is character. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

Go one step further. Love is of God; love is morality; now you find that love is religion also. "Every one that loveth is born of God." How often do we find in the communion of other Churches men who surprise us by the spirituality and the saintliness of their lives!

We hold such Churches, perhaps, to be in error; we can point to a dozen doctrines which to us are unbelievable and are rejected by us with noble and justifiable incredulity. We know that whosoever enters such Churches has to subscribe to these doctrines, and therefore we should logically conclude that the man who lives beneath the shadow of a corrupt Church cannot be pure, and the man who assents to false doctrines cannot be a child of the truth. But love laughs our poor inquisitive logic to scorn, and when a man like Cardinal Newman dies the whole religious world, without distinction of denomination or sect, feels that a dedicated life has ended, that a light from God is extinguished. Love looks into the secret of his character and proclaims, "He that loveth is born of God," and all who do truly profess and call themselves Christians praise God for the image of God in Cardinal Newman.

Or how frequently, again, do we find that people who profess piety lack something which we expect them to possess, and people who make no profession of piety often have that indefinable charm of a gracious nature which makes us feel somehow that religion is a reality. Without apparent effort such people diffuse happiness around them because they are sweet-tempered and quick to help and consid-

erate of others, and inconsiderate only of themselves. We know all this, yet we are troubled about them, because no definite profession of piety is upon their lips. We feel the divine charm of their presence, yet we are concerned because they hide in sacred reticence the deepest feelings of their hearts. We know that their whole life is a life of love—disinterested and laborious love—ministering to others and seldom ministered unto, yet we permit ourselves insolently to wonder if they are born of God. Wonder no longer! "Every one that loveth is born of God."

How often has it happened that the sweetest and most gracious of lives closes without sign, is withdrawn without opportunity for religious profession or farewell! Perhaps it is some fair girl, whose flower-like maidenhood has been a fragrance and a joy, whose short life has been pure and loving and blameless, and yet you are troubled because those closed lips made no positive profession of faith in Christ before the end. And do you think so ill of God's insight, of Christ's understanding of your child's life as that? Do you suppose the Father does not know his own? Poor mourning, troubled heart, behold, I say to you, in the name of Christ, "Let not your heart be troubled," "Every one that loveth is born of

God." It is easier to quote Scripture on a death-bed than to live a life of love, and these chose that more difficult and better part which shall not be taken away. And remember that this is the brief summary of all the teaching of Jesus; in the story of the good Samaritan; in the parable of the prodigal son; in the incident of Dives and Lazarus; in his words to Peter about forgiving seventy times seven; in his apology for Mary Magdalene, that she loved much and therefore was forgiven much; in his own conduct to his disciples, both before and after the resurrection; in his beatitudes and in all his words, all his deeds, the great lesson that Christ tries to teach us is that the supreme quality is love. He sums up the whole human race in himself, and makes humanity the concrete Christ whom we are to love. He does not ask us for adoration, for praise, or for worship, but he commands us to love all men and to see him in the lowest and most forlorn of all. He specifically says that an act of kindness is a thing which cannot be forgotten, even at the judgment-seat, and that when we stand there the one supreme test by which we shall be all tried will be, Have we loved or not? And that is, after all, the only possible test when you think of it, because love is the real flower and fruit of all religion.

It is religion, it is piety, it is more than either faith or hope—it is the very soul of both. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

And then take one more golden step. Love is of God; love is morality; love is religion; lastly, love is life, love is immortality. "Every one that loveth is born of God"—born into a larger life, born into the spaciousness of an eternal life. We sometimes permit ourselves to debate whether life is not more than love. There are times when we are impressed with the spaciousness of this life of ours, when we suddenly realize the joys of living, and are athirst to drink a full draught of life. We want to know every thing, we want to understand every thing, we would fain mix in the most crowded places of life and feel the pulsations of the tide of humanity, and move amid its swiftest currents, and in such an hour we ask ourselves, What is love? Surely it is nothing more than a mere episode in the great drama, one of the many fruits of life—perhaps the choicest, but that is all. For when that passion of mere living possesses us it eclipses all other passions, and then we turn away from love because we see that it is a yoke, because we believe it to be a renunciation of the full-

ness of personal life, because it is the subjugation of our nature to the exigencies and the needs of another nature. The man or woman who does this usually lives to learn that love, after all, is the one thing worth living for, and they often know what it is to sit amidst the ruins of life in a friendless old age, amidst gains and gauds that have lost their charm, and to long with inexpressible yearning for one drop of that cup of love which they once so contemptuously rejected. For the truth is that love is life; it is the only true and eternal life; it is the birth of a man's soul into a higher state of being. Look back over the past and tell me what are the Pisgah moments which stand out in the retrospect of life, what are those hours that are most distinctly recollected as the supreme hours in a life-time? They are the moments when we loved the most, and when we gave ourselves away, when we lost the sense of self; then the bells of life rang with a mellow chime indeed, and there was no discord of sweet bells jangled. Then our nature did actually find its full expression, its highest exposition, for then we were filled with the spirit of love, and we were sharing the life of the God of love. You will never know the fullness of life until you know the fullness of love, for "every one that loveth is born of God."

There, then, as I have said, is the last analysis of Christianity, and I pray you to accept it. Like all profound things, it is really simple; it is, in fact, so simple that men doubt whether it can be true. Men cannot make themselves believe and understand that Christianity is merely love; that a great church is simply the temple of love; that what all this elaborate organization of worship and preaching aims at is this—to teach men to love God, to love each other. Men cannot be brought to understand that when they have once learned to love all social problems will be swept away and all social sores will be healed. And because men cannot accept a solution of Christianity so simple they go on inventing, from age to age, hundreds of other definitions, and they overlook one thing which is every thing. Let your definitions go; do not try to narrow and belittle Christianity to suit your own narrow creed. Do not try to pour the ocean into a pint pot. Christianity is as broad as the heavens, religion is as vast as the sea, and its true definition is: "Every one that loveth is born of God."

And by whatever public test we may measure Christianity, we do in our private thoughts and our habitual actions apply this test and no other. We drop our theology out of sight

when we have to deal with each other in public, in commercial and family relationships. It is impossible to persuade any jury of intelligent, observant men that the man who is mean and avaricious in his commercial transactions, ill-tempered, or violent, or peevish in his family relationships, spiteful and contentious in his social life and conversation, is really, after all, a good man, because he firmly holds certain articles of belief, and is a man to whom great deference and respect are paid in the church on the Sabbath day. It is impossible, I say, to persuade any jury of intelligent men that the man who is a domestic tyrant, a hard master, an austere and loveless man in the home, shunned by his children, dreaded by his wife, disliked by his servants, is really, after all, a child of God because he reads the Scripture every morning, and can define and illustrate, with copious quotation, every dogma of the Christian faith. Yes, and it is equally impossible to persuade men that the patient mother, toiling unweariedly for her children, the good and gentle girl, whose presence in the home spreads serenity, the one whose hand was ever ready to help us in our childish troubles, whose voice has often soothed our later griefs and desolations, is, forsooth, not a good woman, not a child of God, because her

face is not familiar in the select companies of the earthly saints. We measure sainthood by other tests than these; our measurement may be rough, but at least it is true and it is safe. We say this man is a good man, not because he says he is converted, but we say he is converted because we have found out that he is good. We say, "he can't be wrong whose life is in the right," and that much controverted phrase of Pope's is, after all, but a paraphrase of the word of Christ, "He that hath my commands and doeth them, he it is who loveth me." When we meet these lives of silent goodness we know them to be divine creations by whatever names they are called. Sometimes they are

> "The holy sisters who with wakeful eyes
> Watch by the sick in dreary hospitals,
> Close to the battle-field. Sometimes we see
> The face gleam out beneath a Quaker hood,
> With exquisite eyes of silent blessedness.
> Then all our spirit rises up in praise
> Because God's world holds in its wrecked design
> His image still, who made it very good."

This may be heresy, but it is not my heresy; it is the heresy of the apostle John, who has defined the only true catholic and apostolic Church when he says, "Every one who loveth is born of God."

And as I close there seems to pass before

my mind a vision of how these principles may apply in all directions, how they may radiate like a divine light and lift the darkness of the world. There, for instance, is Buddhism, with its lovely story of Gautama. We hear Gautama saying, as he goes forth from his palace to live and die for the poor:

> "Thou knowest how I muse these many moons,
> Seeking to save the sad earth I have seen,
> And how my soul yearns sore for souls unknown,
> And how I grieve for griefs that are not mine."

Or, if it be objected that this is but a poetic interpretation of the legend of the Buddha, we may take Gautama's own words: "Never will I seek or receive private salvation, never enter into final peace alone; but forever and every-where will I live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature." Is there no divine accent in this? Can any who attain to this spirit ever fail to please God? Can any please God without attaining to it? Here is the teaching of Christ upon the lips of Gautama; here is the love which redeems, and surely as we think of it a new hope dawns upon us, and we see that in the day of judgment there may be those who shall come from the north and south and from the east and west, of whom we have never dreamed, and shall sit down in the kingdom of the Father,

because every one that has learned the spirit of Christ, howsoever he has learned it, is born of God.

There is the great preacher yonder, whose orthodoxy and heterodoxy were the conversation and the discussion of all the Churches around the world. I see him as he preaches his last sermon, not knowing it to be his last. Then, when the lights are lowered and the crowd has gone, there come into the church two little ragged, wretched lads, and I see the great preacher talking to them of the love of Christ, and stooping over them with tender fatherliness. Then he tells the choir to sing for them:

> "I heard the voice of Jesus say,
> 'Come unto me and rest;'"

and lays his hand in blessing upon those little waifs, and thus Henry Ward Beecher leaves the church where he has ministered for a lifetime and goes home. Do you think I want to hear any more chatter about his orthodoxy and heterodoxy? I have looked into the very heart of the man, I have had a vision of the inmost essence of his life, I have seen the spring and fountain of it all; and I know that he has the great compassionate Christlike heart beating in him, and "Every one that loveth is born of God."

And so I look into the great world of commonplace life round about me, and I see how this text radiates the light every-where. There was a student once who asked Robertson of Irvine the old scholastic quibble, whether he could tell how many souls could be supported on the point of a needle. "O, dear me, yes," said he; "that is easy enough. I can tell that." "How so?" said the student. "Well," said Robertson, "as I was walking home the other night along the sea-shore I passed a house where a poor widow lives; her husband was drowned at sea last winter. She has five little children, and as I looked through the window I saw in the fire-light two little golden heads in the bed yonder, and another little golden head in the cradle, and two other children sitting at the mother's knee. She was working away with her needle, and it was flashing in the fire-light, and was going as hard as it could go. So," continued Robertson, "I know how many souls can be supported on the point of a needle—five, don't you see!"

And as I look through that window I seem to look upon the whole vision of domestic life, on mothers toiling and never calling it toil, on the vision of innumerable women all the world over who give themselves away and are not so much as thanked for it, on the silent hero-

isms which redeem life and which are its unuttered poetry, its saving salt, its divine attestation. And these heroisms which are the birth of love are every-where. The most defective human souls are capable of them. In any pure love, however partial and imperfect its scope, there is always something that transforms—nay, that transfigures. Every bit of common glass can reflect the sunlight, and every heart that loves in the very act of loving reflects some broken ray of the love of God. To love is essentially a religious act. Do not think, then, of religion as a new, strange, beautiful graft upon the tree of human life—it is of its essence. Do not think, then, of the Church as a company of elect and select souls gathered out of the moral ruins of the world; the Church is larger than we think, and Christianity is larger than the Churches. Christ comes not to destroy human nature, but to fulfill it, by guiding it to its highest development. And in all lands, and among all peoples, in obscure directions undiscerned by us, in all lives that love and suffer and sacrifice themselves uncomplainingly for the good of others, these higher developments already exist, and are not unrecognized in heaven. The calendar of saints is known alone to God, and there are strange names in it, the names

of secret saviours of the poor, of hidden helpers of the needy, verily a great multitude which no man can number.

And so I rejoice. I see a world that is not outcast, not wholly evil, and not forsaken, for love works in it still, and God is love, and love is every-where. Like a great bell of hope, mellow, ceaseless, glorious in its music, the words of John ring across the world, "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God."

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.—*John i*, 6.

And the common people heard him gladly.—*Mark xii*, 37.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.—*Matt. xiii*, 33.

Theocracy, Government of God, is precisely the thing to be struggled for. We will praise the Hero-priest, who does what is in him to bring them in: and wears out, in toil, calumny, contradiction, a noble life to make God's Kingdom of this Earth.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

XII.

WESLEY AND HIS WORK.

I AM aware that between these passages of Scripture there is no exegetical coherence ; but they may serve to furnish us with suggestions for the great occasion which attracts our attention to-night. They may be justly said to sum up a great life and a great movement, and thus they have a vital, if not an exegetical, coherence. They in turn explain the character of Wesley, the nature of his work, and the philosophy of its success. To the whole world that life and work have long afforded a fascinating study. It is said that art knows no frontiers, and neither does Christianity; and all the demarkations of sect disappear and are forgotten in the common interest we feel in a chapter of Christianity—the most wonderful and far-reaching in its effects since the Reformation. We do not celebrate the success of Methodism ; we celebrate the triumph of Christianity. We do not ask you to join with us in the laudation of a man or a system, but to thank God for one of the most fruitful forces

that has ever worked in the world for the exaltation of human life and character. Men like Wesley belong to no Church; they are the property of Christendom. They have originated not local and limited, but pervasive and universal forces. To mention their names is to breathe the larger air of a catholic charity where only the broader aspects of things are remembered and the petty and sectarian are forgotten. We can scarcely speak of such a man as Wesley as dead; he is enthroned in the unchanging exaltation of those dead but sceptered monarchs who still rule us from their urns; he has

> "Joined the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence—live
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge man's search
> To vaster issues."

I. Now the first passage describes a phenomenon with which we are familiar in history—the advent of the man with a mission. John the Baptist was a burning and a shining light, the very type of the man with a mission. When an age has grown utterly corrupt, when morality has lost its security and religion its impulse; when the Church has become lethargic, and good customs themselves only

swell the general corruption, because the spirit of their observance is Pharisaic and not sincere; or when secular liberties are lost, and tyranny is militant and unrebuked, and wealth remembers its privileges and ignores its responsibilities, then the man with a mission usually appears. It seems as though God tries the patience and faith of men to its last limit by postponing the appearance of the deliverer till things are at their worst, and sometimes the deliverer himself comes as a scourge, an iconoclast, a sword that is whetted for vengeance. The awakening of the European democracy and their emancipation came through the person of a Bonaparte, and by a long succession of wars in which every throne was shaken and crown after crown was tumbled in the dust. The awakening of the democratic instinct in the religion of Europe came through Luther, and in each of these cases it was the very degradation to which things had sunk which made the awakening possible. Whoever misses the psychologic moment in common politics, God never misses it in the government of his world. The hour is timed to the man, and the man is prepared for the hour. When that hour strikes the man always stands ready, and the word for which ages have waited is spoken, the deed is done, the mission is fulfilled, and

the burning and shining light is with us for a season.

But in the religious sphere this phenomenon has two conditions, and the first is that such a man always has the consciousness of a direct relation to God. He lives as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye ; but not only that, he lives as seeing the invisible. An awful consciousness of the infinite and eternal is always his. By signs that are indubitable to him, by the secret and mysterious assurance of his own spirit, by those delicate results which experience registers on his consciousness, and which are the data of a true spiritual science, he knows in whom he has believed, and is absolutely sure of the reality of unseen things. When this temper is carried too far it ends in mysticism, and then all power of action perishes. Wesley has himself expressed this temper when he says, " It is so far from being true that there is no knowledge after we have quitted the body that the doubt lies on the other side, whether there be any such thing as real knowledge till then ; whether it be not a plain, sober truth, not a mere poetical fiction that

'All these are shadows which for things we take,
Are but the empty dreams which in death's sleep we make.'

It is, indeed, the temper of Shakespeare when

he says, 'We are such stuff as dreams are made of' "—and of Burke, when he cries over his dead Absalom, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue."

But from this paralyzing quietism the man with a divine mission is saved by the predominance in him of the practical faculties. He feels the overwhelming presence of God indeed; his eye is always uplifted to the infinite; but a supreme urgency of endeavor possesses him also. And the practical force of his life thus draws its strength from his convincing sense of the unseen. He stands in direct contact with God as the channel through which a divine force flows. He is secure in a divine strength, nourished with a divine ardor, conscious of a divine power which uses him at its will, but always for the best. He is serene, courageous, secure, because he is not his own. Thus Christ with majestic tranquillity fronts his enemies and says his hour is not yet come; and Knox, rowing in the galleys, sees afar the towers of St. Andrew's and assures himself he shall yet preach beneath their shadow; and Newman says, as he lies at the gates of death, "I have a work to do; I shall not die." In other words, this man is a man who is sent of God, and who is supported in the perils and discouragements of his work by the sense that

behind him there is an infinite power which has commissioned him and will sustain him.

The second condition of such a life is that it displays the candor and sincerity which are always the marks of the highest minds. "If it were not so, I would have told you," says Christ, thus striking the note of a supreme candor which desires nothing but the truth, and is willing to sacrifice all things to the truth. "But now ye seek to kill me, a man who hath told the truth which I have heard of God," he says again, and therein expresses a supreme sincerity too. In the man with a religious mission these two qualities must always be the governing qualities. For what is the work of such a man but to declare that which he has heard of God? That is his "sign and note and character." He is, in truth, a prophetic man, who hears the heavenly voices, and looks into the unseen mysteries, and speaks the words which are for the healing of the nations. But those words are not his own, but the Master's who sent him. If he be overcome by personal ambition or love of power; if he listen but for a moment to the voices of expediency and compromise; if he be deflected from the simplicity and docility of the learner who seeks to know and do the will of God, by any power of prejudice, by any

pride of will, by so much has he lost the power to bless his generation and to interpret to it the things which have been hidden or forgotten. By so much he ceases to be a prophetic man, and his mission is betrayed. For to fulfill that mission the clearest sincerity, the utmost intellectual candor, are needed. When the bright luster of this spiritual sincerity is dulled he no longer has the instrument by which the will and truth of God are perfectly reflected. And thus the second great characteristic of the religious reformer is that he is a witness to the light. He dwells in the brightness of God, and declares it; he sees the truth, and is absolutely loyal to it; he prefers the truth to all personal prejudice or predilection; he speaks it to his own dismay, his own loss of esteem and reputation among men; but through the truth he is strong, and becomes one of those enduring forces which defy the havoc of the centuries and the insolence of man's contempt. These are the two great characteristics of the religious reformer; he is a man sent of God, and he is the witness to the light of God.

Here, then, is the key-note to the character and life of Wesley, nor can any phrase describe him better than this: he was "a man sent of God, to bear witness of the light."

Think for a moment of the development of his convictions, and see how admirably these conditions of the consciousness of a mission, and the temper of spiritual candor, are fulfilled in him. We see him growing up in a youth of grace and virtue, for, like John Milton, he had kept his life unsullied. His youth, indeed, has many things in common with the youth of Milton. He leads an equally strenuous intellectual life; he is in great repute as a youth of noble parts; there is a gracious austerity about him, a fastidious purity, a certain loftiness of aim and demeanor which keeps vice at a safe distance; he is skilled as a poet, logician, and linguist; and in the ordinary course of things such a youth would have passed into a manhood of dignified scholarship and easy esteem. But from the first a sense of destiny at times oppresses him. He writes his brother Charles that he must set certain doubts at rest by getting clearer views, because clearer views may be of incalculable service to uncounted generations. This is extraordinary language in a youth who has done nothing to show that he has a great part to play, and it can only be explained by the sense of a mission which was already growing in him. Consider this youth, then, bred in clerical seclusiveness, and mark how eager and candid he is in his

search for truth. He is always seeking some one who can teach him. He has a singular openness of mind, and is ready to receive instruction from any one who can confer it. Long before he has found the light he is the most prayerful of students, and his fellow collegians notice that his face shines with an inward glow after he has spent hours in prayer. So we follow the familiar story—tracing Wesley's progress through ritualism and mysticism, marking how earnestly he strives for the delayed light, how perfectly he lives up to the light which he possesses—until we come to that supreme moment when Peter Bohler, the Moravian, makes clear to him what true religion is, and how it may be obtained. How willing he is to be led! How humbly has he followed every clew of truth which has been his! And now, after thirty-five years of slow and doubtful progress, on this memorable night of May, a hundred and fifty-three years ago, in the old room in Aldersgate Street, he feels his heart strangely warmed, and "felt that he did trust in Christ—Christ alone—for salvation." It was the moment of Wesley's conversion; the hour when his mission was realized. There arose a force which has overflowed the world; in that little room Methodism began, and its cardinal truth was that

men could be converted—and know that they were converted. Baptism, confirmation, sacraments—all that made the early religious life of Wesley—sank into the background, and a living faith in Christ became every thing. For Wesley "the birthday of a Christian was shifted from his baptism to his conversion, and in that change the partition-line of two great systems is crossed." It was to witness to that great truth that Wesley henceforth lived; it is that truth which every-where illumines the poetry and teaching of both the brothers; it is that truth which has in a hundred and fifty years built up the largest Protestant community upon the face of the globe.

And thus Wesley, in the most literal sense, was a witness of the light. The most perfect counterpart of his life was the life of St. Paul. St. Paul also described himself as a witness, who testifies to the "Gospel of the grace of God." Paul's crowning argument was himself. He had no theories to expound, no speculations to elaborate, no new philosophy to establish. He entered the great centers of Greek learning not to add another cult, or play the part of a new Socrates; his was a sublimer and far simpler mission. He came to tell them that once he was blind, and now he saw; once he was in bondage, but now he

was free; once he was a blasphemer, but now he was a missionary of the name he ignorantly blasphemed. His constant test was experience. What he had been he knew others were; what he was he knew others might become. With sublime egotism he called attention to himself as a living fact, and said, "I, Paul, once a blasphemer and injurious, now an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, salute you." He was a witness to two things: that he was a sinner, that he was a sinner saved. He took it for granted that all were sinners; the fact was indisputable. What he had to tell them was how they might know the truth, and how the truth might make them free. To the mere speculative opinions of philosophy he paid no heed. He said, "I, Paul"—never mind how you explain creation and the origin of things—how do you explain me? To the question how this great change was wrought in him, he had one invariable reply—"by the grace of God, I am what I am." Before synagoges and Sanhedrins, mobs and magistrates, keepers of jails and Roman governors, wherever we follow him, he founds his whole doctrine upon a great personal experience. And that was precisely the work of Wesley. Against the scornful criticisms of men he set the experience of the individual. He found the

miracle of his own sudden conversion repeated in the lives of thousands. Gradually there drew around him a unique multitude—men who had been the terror and curse of a country side; magistrates who had begun by upbraiding and denouncing him; men who had been drunkards, profligates, and notorious evil livers, whose lives had incontestably been changed, and who were ready to stand up in every market-place of Great Britain and witness to the grace of God. They all witnessed one thing—the thing that Wesley witnessed to in Aldersgate Street—a supreme spiritual fact which outlives every age, and accommodates itself to every class of man—the knowledge that sin may be forgiven, and that men may know it is forgiven. And is not this doctrine of experience the one great argument for Christian life still? Is not the fact that men are somehow converted, and that the whole bias of a life is obviously changed by some divine process which may happen in a moment, as verifiable a fact as any of the facts of modern science? Is it not as well worth the attention of the philosopher as the life of earthworms or the laws of light? For Wesley that was the fact of all facts, the surest of the sure, the clearest of the clear; the one supreme event in a human life; and Methodism arose

out of his passionate desire to declare this truth which he had re-discovered. And thus from the first—and may it always continue!—Methodism has been built upon fellowship rather than doctrinal tests; upon experience, not on dogma; and hence its elasticity, its life, and its extraordinary growth.

II. Such was the character of Wesley; now look at the nature of his work; and there can be no better description of that work than this: "The common people heard him gladly." To estimate that work you have first of all to realize what the England of Wesley was like. That picture has been drawn for us in unmistakable colors by every writer who has described the eighteenth century. It was an age of religion without faith, of politics without honor, and of life without morality. Robert Walpole said, not with noble scorn, but with sincere conviction, that every man had his price; nor is there any reason to believe that he ever found himself wrong in his estimate of those with whom he had to deal. Dr. Johnson again tells us of Walpole that he always talked grossly at his own table, because he found that this was the only species of conversation in which all could indulge. There is not a page in the biography of the public men of the time that does not bear witness to the venality and

degradation of public life, and equally to the corruption of general morals. When the customs of the upper classes were what they were it is not surprising that the life of the lower classes was inconceivably brutal and degraded. The most instructive commentary on lower class customs is found in Hogarth's pictures and John Wesley's journals. In the Beer Street and Gin Lane of the great artist there is given the most hideous picture of drunkenness that painter ever drew, and it is drawn from the life. In the journals of the great evangelist are chronicled the faithful reports of an eye-witness who knew the life of England as no other man did, from the Tweed to Land's End, and what do we gather from his pages? Every-where we read of the ignorance and hopelessness of the poor; how the churches of those who should have aided him were closed against him; how magistrates did all they could to silence him; how every-where there were violent mobs ready to rise at the first chance of mischief. The inhumanities of man to man were inconceivable, and a general moral callousness had ensued. London was called the City of the Gallows, for at whatever point you entered it, by land or water, you passed through a long lane of gibbets, where the corpses of felons hung rotting and

bleaching in the light. Slavery was encouraged, and slaves were advertised for sale in the public press. The press-gang was a constant terror. In some parishes every fourth house was a tavern, and drunkenness was general and unrebuked. For the Church had ceased to be a power, and there were clergymen who had as little faith in vital Christianity as the popes of Luther's day. That was the England of Wesley's day; and is it any wonder that immediately on his conversion Wesley's humanitarian sympathy was kindled?

And yet we cannot but pause again to remember who he was, and what his history had been. He was a scholar and a gentleman, a man of poetic genius and reflective mind, with a strong tendency toward mysticism. His natural associates were men of culture, and his friendship with Dr. Johnson is the best proof of his capacity for pleasing cultured men. But from the first he sought to be the apostle of the common people. His noble maxim was to go, not to those who needed him, but to those who needed him most. He saw the multitude as sheep having no shepherd, and he had compassion on them. He set himself to care not only for their souls, but for their minds and bodies. Every modern social movement may be found in the germ in Wesley's practice.

For the poor he wrote grammars, histories, and manuals of medicine; he translated and abridged standard works, publishing some two hundred volumes in all; he was the inventor of cheap literature, and the first man to print his sermons and sow them broadcast. He had incomparable common sense and invincible courage. He was ready to adopt any plan that was for the salvation and welfare of the people, and, once decided on a course, no man could turn him back. He had faith in the common people in an age when every man of intelligence either despised or feared them. He committed to converted colliers and prize-fighters the care of the souls which he had plucked as brands from the burning, and his trust was seldom betrayed. The work grew, and it reads like a romance. In one place the clothes are torn from his back by a brutal mob; in another he is struck with stones, and bleeding, but goes on preaching as though nothing had happened; in yet another a prize-fighter is awed by his serenity, and defends him from the mob. The fact that the churches were closed against him turned out to be an unspeakable blessing. He thereupon began to preach in the open air, and often to innumerable multitudes. He preached three, four, and five times in a day, and often his sermons

exceeded an hour. He thought nothing of traveling sixty to eighty miles a day on horseback. He preached in taverns while his horse was baited, on village greens, in streets and market-places. We see, as we look back, the great silent throngs, as the voice of Wesley floats over them in the early morning stillness, and we hear the cries of the penitent, and the great flood of sound when thousands of voices joined in the hymns to which the movement had given birth. The common people heard him gladly. There was no part of the kingdom where at last he was not known and revered. There is no part of the civilized world where he is not revered to-day; the world was his parish, and the world is his debtor.

It was said at a recent great council, similar to this, that the churches represented there had no mission to the common people. The Congregational Church was not for the common people, but for the "intellectual aristocracy" of the middle classes. I will not pause to ask whether this statement is true or justified, but I say it expresses a temper which is an outrage on Christianity itself. Christ was a common man, his disciples were common men, and it was among common people, and by their ardor of unconquerable heroism, that the Church was founded. Looked at in the

highest way, we ought to remember that Christianity recognizes no class distinctions. We do not minister to classes, we minister to the world. But it is obvious enough that common people make the vast majority of that world, and, therefore, it is to them we must go first. Methodism has never known any thing of "intellectual aristocracies;" it is the Church of the people. It has sprung from the people; it is supported by the people; it exists for the people; and the greatest glory which any Church can earn is not that intellectual aristocracies applaud it, but that the common people hear it gladly, and by it the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

And the success of Wesley was based on two facts: he preached the love of God, and he embodied it. It is an entire mistake to suppose that he affected the great multitudes he addressed by any vivid pictures of hell, or the common rant of a cheap and vulgar evangelism. He had as keen a dislike to cant and rant as any man who ever lived. He says he prefers a sermon on good temper to what is vulgarly called a "gospel sermon." "The term," says he, "has now become a mere cant word. I wish none of our society would use it. It has no determinative meaning. Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense

nor grace, bawl out something about Christ and his blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, 'What a fine gospel sermon!'" It is equally a vital error to suppose that there was any thing austere and priggish in Wesley's Methodism. He says, "Religion is love: as it is the happiest, so it is the cheerfulest thing in the world; it is utterly inconsistent with moroseness, sourness, severity, and, indeed, whatever is not according to the softness, and sweetness, and gentleness of Christ Jesus." He tells his preachers that they are to hate nothing but sin. Wherever he goes, especially in his later life, he carries with him a peculiar serenity, cheerfulness, and vital joy. The great message he had for the multitude was that God loved them, and the multitude saw in the life of Wesley the evidence that God had not forgotten them. George Eliot has caught the real tone and spirit of early Methodist preaching in her noble and pathetic picture of Dinah Morris preaching on the village green; and that was a study from the life. When Wesley faced great sinful multitudes, his voice quivered as the voice of Dinah Morris did, and his words had the same yearning of ineffable compassion in them. He did not know how to spare himself. At Cardiff he says, "My heart was enlarged; I knew not

how to give over, so that we continued three hours." He preaches on his father's tomb at Epworth one lovely June evening for "near three hours," and this was his fourth service in the day. It may almost be said that he rediscovered the lost art of preaching to the common people and gave it a new lease of life. Again, one catches a glimpse of those great multitudes, and sees the face of Wesley rapt and solemn while he preaches, or we behold him, as Crabbe Robinson describes him, helped into the pulpit in extreme old age by two of his brethren—a saintly figure with clear eyes and long white hair—to the last testifying of the Gospel of the grace of God. Is it wonderful that the neglected poor crowded to him? Do they ever fail to crowd to the man who comes to them clothed in the compassion of Christ? Is it not there that our work as ministers and churches still lies? The common people—the ignorant, the poor, the outcast, the great unchurched masses for whom the decorous worship of the sanctuary has no charm, and the formal priest and Levite no balm of healing—this is your great constituency, O churches; these are they who need you most; these will repay you with the quickest faith, the kindliest welcome, the noblest gratitude; and was it not among these that Christ found

almost his only sympathizers, and from them selected the apostles who have changed the world?

III. We glance lastly at the philosophy of the growth of Wesley's work. Wesley introduced a new idea into the life and religious thought of the people, and it has taken root all over the world, till there are not fewer than twenty-five millions that own his spiritual sway. His work began in the most insignificant of ways, and in this it resembles every great religious movement, and even Christianity itself. And it is at this point that the illustration of the leaven asserts itself, and we see how singularly felicitous it is. What is leaven? It is so humble a force that one can scarcely call it a force at all. Yet there is a secret potency and pervasiveness about it which is omnipotent in its own sphere. When once it has begun to ferment it will go on fermenting till the whole mass of dough is leavened. And in this respect nothing could more aptly illustrate the vital force of ideas and of spiritual movements. Jesus applies the illustration to his own words and work, and this is the supreme example of its meaning. Think of what it means that here are certain words of Jesus spoken long since from some obscure hill-side of Palestine—words of deep spiritual

originality and significance. They were heard by a company of peasants in the most insignificant country of the world. No telegraph caught them up and flashed them round the globe; no printing-press, for fourteen centuries, was to give them permanence and currency. They were uttered in a slender space of time measured by minutes; the clear air stirred with their vibration for a few seconds, and then was still again as though no voice had spoken. Presently the crowd separated; very soon the Speaker was unjustly condemned and his lips were forever silenced on the cross. But those words were not lost; they were preserved on something more permanent than parchment; they were stamped on the living hearts and memories of men. One by one men felt their potency and significance and surrendered to their spell. Yet so slow was the process—so silent and gradual—that it seemed to the casual onlooker as if nothing had happened. It was as Jesus said it would be: men would say there was no kingdom of God at all, because they were incapable of recognizing the progress of silent and secret forces. The true strength of those forces we can now measure. We know now that ideas are more powerful than empires; that he who utters the truth has crowned himself with a supremacy

which the centuries cannot destroy. Empires have perished, the whole face of the world has suffered infinite and multitudinous change, but the ideas of Jesus live; they live in added strength; they are as leaven working through the hearts and minds of men still, till the whole shall be leavened.

But the force of the text is to teach us not only the vitality of ideas but the value of insignificance. The kingdom of God is to be victorious by the aggregation of little things, the conversion of peasants, the change which passes over the life and thought of innumerable obscure and uninfluential individuals. Is not that lesson of the value of insignificance one of the lessons continually taught us by the brilliant discoveries of modern science? The rain-drop is a little thing, yet it is the power of rain-drops to denude continents of their soil and to wear a course through the living granite and to shatter mountains and literally remove them into the sea. It is the rain-drop which has built up in the deltas of the Mississippi, from the sand and silt of continual storm-water, a tract of land larger than Ireland; it is the rain-drop which is hourly fretting away the spires and rock-towers of the Matterhorn, transforming their adamantine fronts, and yearly reducing their height and

majesty. The sand-storm is a little thing, but it can bury cities and cover the Sphinx in a thick drift from which no human power can extricate it. The particles of the air we breathe are so minute as to be actually invisible, but from their united strength is born the storm which wastes forests in its passage and overwhelms the stablest works of man with desolation. There are a hundred chemic substances that appear but as useless dust, and yet they have power in them to dissolve the toughest metals or wholly change their character. There are a hundred organisms so minute that the best microscope can hardly discover them, but they have power to carry death and suffering through an empire and to utterly depopulate the most prosperous country. Insignificance! Pray, what is insignificant? Has it not been said that there are forces hidden in a dew-drop which, if liberated, might wreck a world? And what is more insignificant than the individual man—the poor, obscure, human entity, whose days are as a shadow that passes away, and whose life is but a few troubled breaths between two eternities? Yet every great movement which has changed the world is the result of changes in the individuals who have first received and then spread the force of a single idea. It is so Jesus says

his kingdom will come. It will touch individuals, and through them change the world. Men will not know that any thing is happening till the kingdom has come ; they will treat as insignificant that which is the agent and power of God and is his manifestation among men. When Christ changes you his kingdom has advanced one stage the nearer ; through you and me the force will stream on and on and touch others ; it will be as the leaven that leavens the whole lump.

To dwell further upon the means by which the leaven of truth was spread by Wesley and his evangelists is needless. There have been brotherhoods and religious orders in the world before ; but certainly none more extraordinary than these early Methodists. They were trained to bear suffering without murmur, and poverty without complaint. They gladly submitted themselves to the rule of Wesley, and at his will were moved hither and thither to do their great work. How many unknown Dinah Morrises have lived and died heroically in those early days! How many gracious women have submitted to the yoke of comparative penury to help the cause for which they lived! How many children have been born in this hard Methodist cradle, and have grown up to bless the kindly rule of Wesley! And

as the page unfolds, we see Wesley's crusaders in other hemispheres than ours; we follow Asbury in his rapid pioneer journeys in America; we see Whitefield standing with the sinking candle in his hand to the last pleading with the people on the night in which he dies; we hear Wesley's soldiers praying with each other on European battle-fields; we watch Coke dying just as he sees afar the turrets and battlements of the great Indian Empire which he longed to win for Christ; we see in latter days Fiji civilized and Christianized by the heroic labors of Hunt and Calvert; and from strange lands there come to us the echoes of the old hymns, the record of the old experiences, told in the old familiar phrases, which in Wesley's day often stirred the souls of thousands as they prayed in Gwennap pit, or held their joyous love-feasts or solemn watch-nights in many a meeting-house of Cornwall or Northumberland.

"The simplification of life"—that great keynote which was struck in the great Revolution, and is still heard so clearly in the poetry of Wordsworth—was the note which Wesley sounded before either. He saw that true riches consisted in the fewness of our wants, not in the abundance of our possessions; and he urged on all his converts the utmost frugality of life.

He himself set the example. It is computed that he gave away not less than £30,000, the profits of his publications, and, until he was a very old man, he never rode in a chaise. He introduced the same note of simplification into religion. He thought little of creeds, and never imposed one on his followers. He said, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine? I ask no further question. If it be, give me thine hand. For opinions or terms let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship." He defined a Methodist, in the broadest of terms, as "one who lives according to the method laid down in the Bible." He wrote once: "The Methodists do not impose, in order to admission into their society, any opinions whatever. The Presbyterian may be a Presbyterian still; so may the Quaker, and none will contend with him about it. They think and let think. One condition, and one only, is required—a real desire to save their souls." His definition of his own work was that he aimed at spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land. He began life with absolute submission to the Church; he ended it with absolute submission to the living Christ alone. He knew how to descend deep and deeper into himself, till

nothing but a clear and undivided voice was heard—"a voice that does away with doubt, and brings with it persuasion, light, and serenity." * He taught that to follow that inward voice was life; that for every man there was that specific assurance, and in that teaching he simplified theology and brushed away its technicalities. The result was that religion was made clear and simple to the most ignorant, and became a thing of freedom, of cheerfulness, of certitude and unfading joy.

But the leaven of Methodism is not seen alone in the creation of a sect or Church. It has touched and changed all other Churches. Its best elements have long ago been incorporated into the common life of Christendom. It has liberalized the theology of all the Churches. Never himself a dogmatist, always ready to prefer conduct to creeds, declaring himself "the friend of all, and enemy of none," animated by national rather than sectarian aims, Wesley has been an unmeasured and immeasurable power in purifying the religious life of the whole world. The man who declared that doubtless Marcus Aurelius was one of those who would sit down in the kingdom of Christ when the children of the kingdom

* *Amiel's Journal*, p. 10.

would be cast out, could not help infusing into the life of his nation a new breadth of thought, a new tolerance and charity. What he did by his preaching Charles Wesley did by his poetry, and it was his glorious task to create a magnificent hymnology, in the hospitality of whose praise all Churches are united. The modern Church of England is the creation of Wesley; and, far as it may have traveled on lines the opposite of his, it was he who gave it the new impulse which makes it a great and living power to-day.

Nor is this all. All historians are now agreed that it was Methodism, or, to use the larger and more catholic phrase, the evangelical revival, which saved Great Britain from a revolution which might have been as bloody, as disastrous, and far more prolonged than the French Revolution. The very men who would have made magnificent mob-leaders Wesley subdued and made class-leaders; the men who would have fought with the ferocity of mastiffs behind English barricades Wesley enlisted in the great crusade of righteousness and made soldiers of Jesus Christ; and while France rang with the fierce music of the Marseillaise, sung to a frightful accompaniment of lust and pillage and slaughter, John Wesley and his helpers were going up

and down the land singing the Marseillaise of Methodism:

> 'O that the world might taste and see
> The riches of his grace:
> The arms of love that compass me
> Would all mankind embrace."

And thus, when the great revolution came, fifty years of the great revival had done its work, and it was only the torn and futile edges of the storm-cloud that swept along our shores.

To-night we look back to that simple but memorable scene which took place a hundred years ago in that little room in City Road. Wesley literally died working—

> "Languor was not in his heart,
> Weakness not in his word,
> Weariness not on his brow."

In his eighty-fourth year he gave the first five days of the New Year to the task of walking through the streets of London, soliciting alms for the relief of the poor. His last letter was a noble protest against the horrors of slavery. A few weeks only before his death he completed his long literary labors by translating for the use of his people a French treatise on the happiness of the future state. In those last days wherever he appeared in

public men regarded him with the veneration due to a saint, and to their friendly greetings his habitual reply was, "Little children, love one another." It was his custom to conclude his meetings in these days with the lines,

> "O that without a lingering groan
> I may the welcome word receive—
> My body with my charge lay down,
> And cease at once to work and live."

And his prayer was answered. He preached his last sermon on February 23, 1791, and came home to die. Never, surely, was the place of death more sacred, more lovely, or more visibly the vestibule of heaven. It was not dying; it was euthanasia. To the last the happy old man sang:

> "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
> And when my voice is lost in death,
> Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
> My days of praise shall ne'er be past
> While life, or thought, or being last,
> Or immortality endures."

Then, with the memorable word, "The best of all is, God is with us," and a whispered "Farewell" to one of his best-loved helpers, the spirit of Wesley passed to the beatific vision.

So passed away John Wesley—the greatest religious reformer of modern times. The se-

cret of his success is found in his faith, his practical sagacity, his boldness of invention, above all, in that enthusiasm for humanity which possessed him. He started a movement which communicated its conscious or unconscious impulse in turn to Wilberforce and Howard, to Raikes and Pounds, and in our own day has borne abundant fruit in a thousand lives of sacrifice, in enterprises of charity and philanthropy which have covered the world, in the gracious development of compassion, in the mitigation of the human lot, in the sanctification of the common conscience, and the redemption of the general life. For all of us life will soon be ended and we shall be silent, "gone with the tumult that we made, and the rolling and trampling of ever-new generations will pass over us, and we shall hear it not any more, forever." Upon us each, day by day, and more and more, there presses the great problem of human misery which Wesley sought to solve. We have an organized and intelligent Christianity unknown in his day; we have a thousand appliances for the work of social redemption which he lacked. Are we living in his spirit? Are we consumed with the passion for souls which he felt? Have we in us the elements out of which the soldiers of this new crusade of Christianity are formed?

Or does this saintly and courageous spirit rebuke and shame and condemn us for our manifest unlikeness to his example?

To attempt to exhibit the lessons of such a life is a needless task. How many are these lessons, how easily perceived, and yet how hard to learn! May we, and all Christendom, be to-day baptized anew for the dead! May we see with new clearness of vision what it is that makes life really great, and what alone makes death a triumph. May we learn, in the spirit of this great life, to dedicate ourselves anew to the service of humanity; and above all, may we attain to a stronger and simpler faith in the Gospel of Christ when we see how mightily it was used by him to the redemption of multitudes. Such men are not given only for our admiration, but our emulation. We cannot do all that they did, and no doubt times and opportunities are changed; but how much more can we do than we are doing? For the worth of such a service as this is, as I have said, not that we laud a man or praise a system, but that we measure ourselves beside his single-mindedness, his self-sacrifice, his heroic devotion, and try to be like him. The end of the true evolution is to lift all men to an heroic level, to an equality of faith and service. That is the great hope which we in-

herit—the future toward which we move if we be worthy.

> "Progress is
> The law of life; man is not man as yet;
> Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
> Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
> While only here and there a star dispels
> The darkness—here and there a towering mind
> O'erlooks its prostrate fellows; when the host
> Is out at once to the despair of night,
> When all mankind alike is perfected,
> Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
> I say, begins man's general infancy."

We see in Wesley the type of a supreme consecration; the vision of a glory which is within the reach of all; a species of eminence to which the humblest may attain. Wide differences of degree there may be between us and him, but the spirit of his life may be the spirit of ours; and so, though one star differs from another star in glory, we may move in a common sphere, and shine with the same kind of radiance. And behold, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

THE END.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: March 2005

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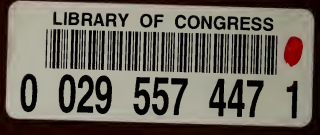
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